

the chronicle

Fond farewell to stalwarts of pharmacy



— see page 10

Students rub shoulders with Olympic stars

— see page 12



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Parkinson's fight for comedian Tommy

BLACK COUNTRY comedian Tommy Mundon has been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease – but is facing up to it with his usual sense of humour.

Tommy, just turned 77, has spoken about how he is coping with the progressive neurological illness in order to give hope to others.

Shoulder

"I used to write roughly what I was going to say in a performance. Now I'm getting it down in full for a set of about 20 minutes. I will still ad lib when I can."

"I've got patches that slowly

release the medication to control the pain and I have physiotherapy at Corbett Hospital in Stourbridge.

"What I need to do now is to master the slight stammering and stuttering I've got – but I've been doing some shows and have more planned this year."

Shoulder

"I went to see a consultant at Dudley Guest Hospital and eventually got the diagnosis."

Tommy, who has a daughter and two grandchildren, has just started performing after a gap of a few months. He has several bookings

which he hurt his shoulder, that led Tommy to find out he had Parkinson's.

He said: "During the course of treatment for the shoulder, my doctor told me he had a feeling I'd got Parkinson's coming on – and Val noticed that I sometimes stared into space."

"I went to see a consultant at Dudley Guest Hospital and eventually got the diagnosis."

Tommy, who has a daughter and two grandchildren, has just started performing after a gap of a few months. He has several bookings

lined up and will be in a Black Country comedy tour of theatres from October.

"I'm optimistic about the future and am getting there thanks to the medication and advice," he said.

Val, who will celebrate 40 years of marriage to Tommy in September, said: "The local Parkinson's nurses have been excellent."

"Tommy's attitude to it is great," she added. "A lot of people would throw in the towel – but he's quite determined."



Comedian Tommy Mundon

Shoe People creator has £12m care homes plan

SHOE PEOPLE cartoon creator Jim Driscoll is investing up to £12million in two care home projects that will create almost 200 jobs in Stourbridge and the Wyre Forest district.

His firm has taken over the Park Attwood Clinic in Trimley, near Bewdley, which is due to open as a new brain injury rehabilitation centre in early summer.

It will employ about 50

people. And he is about to apply to Dudley Council for planning permission to develop the 1.5 acre former Labour Club and YWCA site in Hagley Road, Stourbridge, as a three-storey, "iconic", U-shaped building to include a 62-bedroom care home and 38 apartments.

The Stourbridge

scheme – expected to open late next year – would create jobs for 100 to 140 people, full and part time.

Fantastic

Mr Driscoll, aged 63, who now lives in Chaddesley Corbett, near Kidderminster, said: "The Stourbridge care centre will look like a block on the South of France, with balconies, and planners have told us it will be an iconic building."

"There will be a 62-bed care home and 38 two-bedroom apartments where people can live and call on care when they need it 24 hours a day."

"People living there would be able to have family to stay with them and it will be fantastic because it will be close to all the amenities of the town centre." The former Labour Club and YWCA in Hagley Road have already been demolished to make way for the development.

Mr Driscoll, who sold the Shoe People brand in 1996, has set up Park Attwood Ltd to run the new care businesses and Christopher Charles Properties as a development company.

College funds to increase

STOURBRIDGE College is bucking the trend of cuts to education providers with an increase in government funding.

Virtually every university will see its money reduced for the new academic year which starts in September, new figures reveal.

Colleges will also see their government help reduced. But Stourbridge College will get more money with its funding rising from £110,708 to £114,000, an increase of three per cent.

Deal

Halesowen College will have £1,066 cut from this year's funding of £64,722, a reduction of two per cent.

The University of Wolverhampton must deal with a drop of just under £3.5 million, from £54,267,983 to £50,769,000 – a cut of 6.4 per cent.

The move has prompted a warning by the university's vice-chancellor Caroline Gipps of an "inevitable" rise in tuition fees next year.

Elsewhere, a total of £11,471 will be cut from Dudley College's funding, from £792,471 down to £781,000 – a 1.4 per cent drop.

Meals service for the elderly gets the axe

A CHARITY-run meals on wheels service in Stourbridge has been axed due to lack of funding.

The national WRVS charity is closing Carlisle Hall, in Victoria Street.

Following a consultation period between staff and volunteers the official announcement was made because the hall had been losing money for several years.

In October last year the hall was battling to meet the £50,000 annual costs to provide a lifeline to people across Dudley.

The service was launched two years ago, following the end of Dudley Council's scheme. But other luncheon clubs which use the service will have alternative provision made.

Full story – Page 32

Cabinet member for transport at Dudley Council Angus Adams today said a full business plan had been submitted and was being considered by Network Rail. If approved, work could begin on the project as soon as 2014.

Councillor Adams said: "We believe there is a very strong case for this project to be approved, and are very optimistic. It would ease pressure on the roads and create a fast passage between areas of the region which don't have rail links at the moment."

SHARE

"These tram-trains are being trialled at the moment in Sheffield, and are widely used across Europe already."

He said the money was expected to come largely from Department for Transport grants, along with contributions from councils. Tram-trains would share the line with freight trains and the line would be in operation for an estimated six to 10 years, while councils in the region wait to see whether £289m to extend the Midland Metro will be made available.

Leicester-born, Mrs Ball is a former attendant at St Michael's and All Angels Parish Church, Norton, and supported Norton Sunshine Club.

More details and map – Page 2

Sprightly Marjorie has a ball at 101

A FORMER resident of Norton, Stourbridge, has celebrated her 101st birthday.

Mrs Marjorie Ball who lives in Whittington Road for 17 years, was given a party at the nursing home just outside Gravesend, Kent, where she has lived for several months.

Her son David, who lives in Bridgnorth, said: "Nearly 20 family members and nursing staff arranged the party."

Care

"My mother used to live with my brother, John but was moved to a nursing home after a setback in her health requiring more care," he added.

Leicester-born, Mrs Ball is a former attendant at St Michael's and All Angels Parish Church, Norton, and supported Norton Sunshine Club.



Pensioner Marjorie Ball reads all her 101st birthday cards



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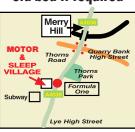
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Claims of £200m profit from line

Jobs boost if tram-train scheme can reach fruition

After years of financial bartering and political lobbying, £289million plans to extend the Midland Metro still appear to be a distant dream for the Black Country.

But council leaders eager to kick-start the region's economy following the recession have unveiled plans to invest money in reopening disused freight lines and introducing a tram-train service to ferry people between Stourbridge and Aldridge.

The line, which would link two far corners of the Black Country, would bring in an estimated £200million profit and create hundreds of jobs, it is claimed.

If a Rail Utilisation Strategy report due to be released in the summer lends its support to the scheme, funding could be released and work started in 2014 or sooner, if Stourbridge MP Margot James has anything to say about it.

"I think it will do a lot of good, not just for Stourbridge, but for the whole transport infrastructure of the Black Country," she said.

"I will be working with Centro and Network Rail to try and get this project brought forward. I see no reason why we would have to wait until 2014.

"As well as providing

THE hoped for Metro expansion remains a vague hope on the horizon. But plans to reopen old freight lines could plug the gap and link Stourbridge in the south-west of the Black Country to Aldridge in the north-east. Charlotte Cross reports on the scheme.

an invaluable boost to our economy, it will hopefully help reduce some of the congestion problems that we suffer.

"It's very important that this link is reopened as soon as possible."

The tram-train service would provide a stop-gap for up to a decade, potentially longer, as the Metro plans continue to crawl along. A complicated funding package and government demands have meant the

scheme to expand the Metro from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill has repeatedly hit obstacles.

Vital

The plans to extend the line, which runs from Wolverhampton to Birmingham Snow Hill, were first mooted in 2005 but failed to get vital government backing.

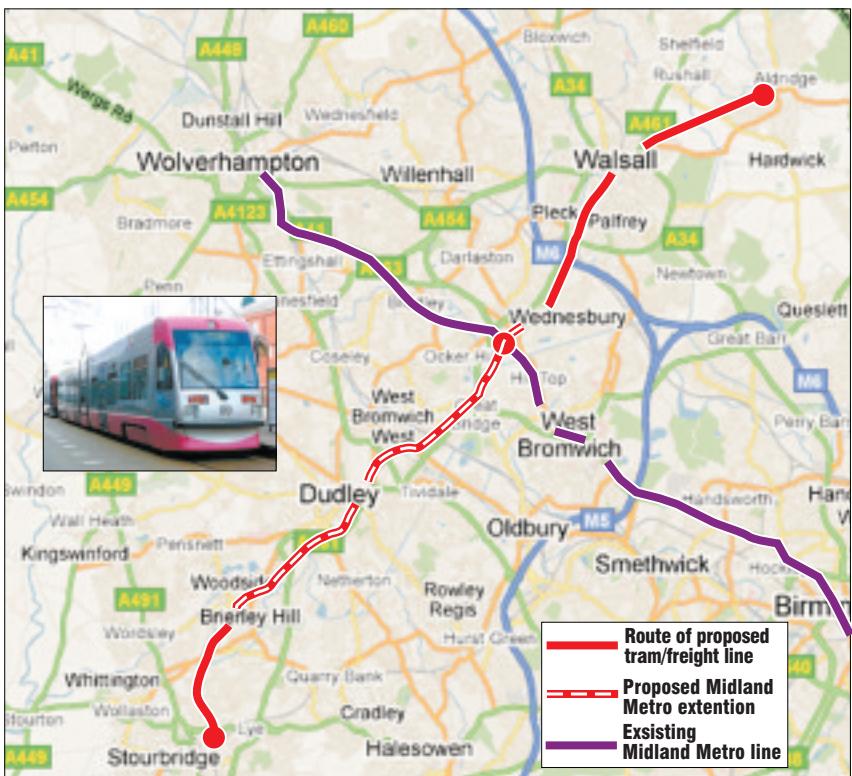
In 2009, West Midlands councils were told the only way they would

be granted cash would be if they introduced congestion charges, which they refused to do.

In November, government inspectors released a damning report labelling the plans "unrealistic" and saying they were unlikely to be delivered until at least 2026.

Meanwhile, original plans to shift cargo on the freight line had been drawn up in the late 90s, but were shelved when Railtrack folded in 2002.

Deputy leader of Dudley Council and member of the Transport Authority Les Jones said: "This isn't a contingency plan in case the Metro



A map showing the proposed route of the tram-train service between Stourbridge and Aldridge

doesn't go ahead - this is something we are actively looking at and starting to plan now."

Councillor Jones said the new, £100million plans - to be largely funded from government grants - would mimic part of the planned Metro extension, along old freight lines between

Wednesbury and Brierley Hill. "One of the problems we suffer in Dudley is that we have a Victorian infrastructure and the roads just can't handle the volume of traffic," he said.

"Public transport is going to be crucial to our long-term prosperity.

"We want to get people

out of cars and onto rail, making it easier for goods vehicles to get around." Traders and local leaders welcomed news of the plans.

Market trader David Flavell, aged 50, who runs the fruit and veg stall opposite Boots in Dudley High Street, said: "I think it does sound like

a very good idea. "Anything that helps bring people in can only be good," said Mr Flavell, of Grazebrook Road, Dudley.

Peter Suddock, chief executive at Dudley Zoo, added: "Any scheme which brings visitors to Dudley Zoo and into the town is to be welcomed."

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Quake workers speak of horror

BLACK Country firefighters returning from earthquake-ravaged Japan have told of their heart-rending search for survivors.

Twelve West Midlands firefighters from the International Search and Rescue (ISAR) squad are just back from the northern region of the country, swamped by a 33ft tsunami which followed the quake.

They include Cradley Heath watch commander Rudy Parkes, of Stourbridge; watch commander Dean Yates of Halesowen fire station; station commander at Oldbury and Cradley Heath, Dean Harris, also from Stourbridge; and Dudley fire station watch commander Russ Gauden of Kinver.

They were part of a 59-strong team from across the UK that also included two rescue dogs and four medical staff.

Efforts

All 12 were involved in a similar mission when an earthquake hit Haiti just over a year ago, while four were involved in the rescue efforts in New Zealand. But the rescue mission in the cities of Ofutano and Kamaishi was among their toughest yet.

Russ Gauden, aged 39, said the scenes of devastation were "beyond comprehension". He said in some areas they were climbing 15ft high piles of ice-covered debris.

"We saw a 50ft high ship in the middle of a residential area," he added.

Veteran firefighter Rudy Parkes said the scene in Japan was the worst he had seen in 23 years of ISR. Mr Parkes added: "It was a scene of utter devastation, the worst I've ever seen.

"In one case I was looking inside a house and thought something was wrong until I realised it was completely upside down."

Golden-hearted couple



Trevor and Betty Homer with Quarry Bank Royal British Legion fundraiser Gloria Donovan, right

A GOLDEN-HEARTED Stourbridge couple have raised £900 for charity after requesting that cash went to good causes rather than presents for their 50th wedding anniversary.

Trevor and Betty Homer, aged 70 and 68 respectively, felt they were "too old" for gifts so made the charity request to friends and family. They have handed over £300 to Quarry Bank branch of the Royal British Legion and £600 to Russells Hall Hospital's Georgina Unit, which cares for cancer patients, and the cancer research unit.

The couple, who live in Jason Street, Stourbridge, first met at the Clifton Cinema, in Lye, in 1956, when she was 13 and he was 15. They have three children and three grandchildren. Mr Homer is a retired builder.

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Meeting soon on schools U-turn

DISCUSSIONS over the Government's decision to scrap millions of pounds worth of school rebuilding projects in Sandwell are set to take place next month.

The borough had nine schemes worth £138 million cut. Sandwell and five other authorities launched legal action after Labour's Building Schools for the Future programme was axed last July.

The Sandwell cutbacks sparked an outcry from parents, pupils and school staff.

Last month the authority was successful in a High Court challenge and Education Secretary Michael Gove was urged to think again.

Visit

Now, council officers are compiling a case to present to the Government on what action should be taken in Sandwell with a meeting expected to be held with officials next month.

However, Sandwell's deputy leader and cabinet member for strategic resources, Councillor Steve Eling, said the authority is still calling for a personal visit from Mr Gove to meet schools affected by the cuts.

Councillor Eling said: "We are supposed to be having discussions in early April."

Schools losing out included Bristall Hall, Heathfields, Perryfields, Wood Green, Stuart Bathurst and Manor and Menzies. Special schools and pupil referral units also lost projects.



Bill Etheridge and wife Star with the offending doll

A SEDGLEY couple due to stand as Tory candidates in a Dudley Council election have resigned from the party in a row over photographs of them posing with a golly doll.

Bill Etheridge, aged 41, and wife Star had been suspended from the Conservative party after a complaint about the photographs was posted on Facebook of them purposely holding up the doll.

But the couple, who were making a stand over political correctness, have now resigned. Mr Etheridge said he had decided to join UKIP instead.

The "golly folly" row blew up after Mr Etheridge, chairman of the Claverley branch of the Conservative Association, and his wife questioned what was wrong with the wild-haired black toys on their Facebook site.

Ammunition

The leader and deputy leader of Dudley Council, Councillors Anne Millward and Lee Jones, last week warned them their stance against "political correctness" could give people ammunition against the party ahead of the elections. On Friday the Etheridges were told in a letter from the party's head office voluntary section disciplinary committee that they were being suspended for 30 days.

The emailed letter said their actions might "bring the party into disrepute". The couple, of Tipton Road, who are members of the Black Country Campaign Against Political Correctness, have now resigned from the party.

Mr Etheridge said he was mystified why there was a "big deal" over the golly doll. "When we were growing up it was just a toy and it didn't even look like a person," said Mr Etheridge, who had been selected to stand as Dudley Council candidate for Brockmoor and Pensnett in the next elections in May.

"We can't understand why they are now a 'no-go' area. The term 'political correctness gone mad' is well used — but this is a total golly folly."

Mrs Etheridge, 39, who was due to stand as Conservative candidate for Coseley East, said: "I can't see how we can bring anyone into disrepute with a little rag doll."

The couple had removed the Facebook "golly" photos before Christmas but posted them back on their "wall" after resigning.

Council officers said they would look into the matter.

traffic. The road was made one-way following complaints of it being used as a rat run. Protesters want to see the road restored to how it was before and say they were not told of the plans until it was too late.

Bill Chambers, aged 75, of nearby Fullbrook Road, presented the petition last week. It has been signed by 377 people.

Council officers said they would look into the matter.

People say their lives have been "made hell" since the system started at Parkway Road earlier this year.

They say it is causing congestion with cars left at a standstill at peak times because of the volume of

Road petition

A PETITION signed by nearly 400 residents calling for a "nightmare" one-way system in a Dudley road to be scrapped has been handed to council officers.

They say it is causing congestion with cars left at a standstill at peak times because of the volume of

traffic. The road was made one-way following complaints of it being used as a rat run. Protesters want to see the road restored to how it was before and say they were not told of the plans until it was too late.

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Mad O'Rourke's pub bites back



Owners Sue and Pete Towler inside the Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory

A POPULAR Black Country pub has reopened after it was bought back from administrators by its former owner.

The Mad O'Rourke's Pie Factory in Tipton has undergone a £30,000 revamp.

Pete Towler bought the property back from administrators PKF earlier this month under the name of P&S Pies Ltd, with his wife Sue as director. All 15 jobs have been secured.

"I am very pleased," said 51-year-old Mr Towler, from Tettishall, Wolverhampton. "The past few months have been pretty stressful. We're hoping now to be able to get things back to the way they were."

The pub, in Hurst Lane, had been closed for three weeks before re-opening last week.

Support grows to honour rugby ace

A CAMPAIGN to honour a Dudley rugby legend in his home town has gathered more than 300 supporters.

Cliff Watson, aged 80, who played for rugby league side St Helens, captained Great Britain and moved to Australia.

He was voted one of his club's top 17 players in its 120-year history, but fans say he has been "forgotten" in Dudley and should be honoured in a similar way to footballer Duncan Edwards.

Dudley Council has said it will consider any suggestions.

The campaign has been launched by Deb Brownlee, chairman of the group raising cash for the regeneration of St John's Church, Kates Hill, where Mr Watson married in 1960.

Display

Mr Watson, who now lives near Sydney, visited the church last month.

Mrs Brownlee feels there should be a plaque or display in Dudley Museum and Art Gallery — or even a statue similar to that of Manchester United legend Edwards.

She said: "Cliff has achieved so much that people aren't even aware of."

Mr Watson grew up in a terraced house in Fisher Street, Dudley, after the family's house in London was bombed in the Second World War.

He was a prop at St Helens and led the Championship Trophy winning team of 1970.

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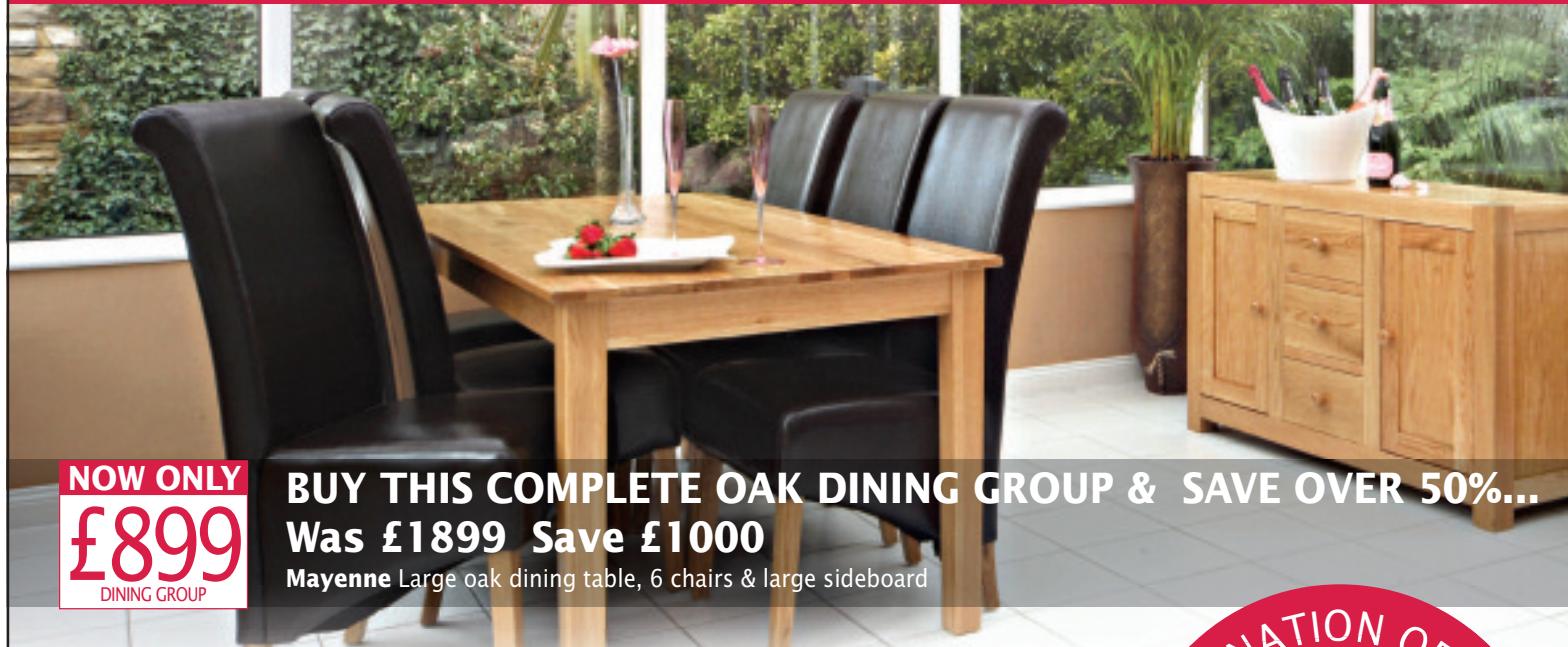
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Checks waiver pledge

THE red tape surrounding business health and safety inspections will be cut as part of a bid to ease the pressure on businesses, a Black Country MP has been told.

Business minister Mark Prisk told Stourbridge MP Margot James the Government plans to adjust regulations so that inspections are more proportionate to risk than they have been.

Miss James raised the issue following a meeting of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, where bosses and MPs met at West Bromwich Albion's grounds to discuss health and safety regulations.

Plea on sex pest

A MAN exposed himself on the side of the road near Hagley.

It happened on the A456 Hagley Road, opposite the Badgers Set public house.

The driver of a white transit-style van had pulled onto the grass verge of the Hagley-bound carriageway.

He was standing against the van when he exposed himself to a passing woman jogger.

It happened on March 7 around 10.30am.

The man is described as white, in his 30s, about 5ft 10 ins tall, clean shaven with collar length hair.

He was wearing workman's clothing.

Witnesses should call 0300 333 3000.



Computer generated impressions of how Dudley Market could look if Dudley Council's plans for a £6 million revamp of the historic site go ahead



Boulevard will be in market's £6m new look



The market in 1899

THIS is how Dudley's historic market place could look like following a £6 million revamp.

Under the plans, the tiled roof would be replaced with vintage-style canopies and a "market boulevard" would be created with trees and a walkway.

The statue of legendary Dudley-born footballer Duncan Edwards would be moved to the other end of the market.

The ageing toilet block would also be relocated to create an obstructed view of Dudley Castle.

The 19th century fountain would be refurbished and a new moat created around the bottom.

The number of permanent stalls would be reduced from 74 pitches but Dudley Council, which is behind the scheme, said temporary stalls could be added on busy days.

Cabinet member for regeneration

Councillor Les Jones said an application for cash from the European Regional Development Fund had passed the first stage.

Decision on whether bosses will be given a £3 million grant towards the scheme will be announced later this year.

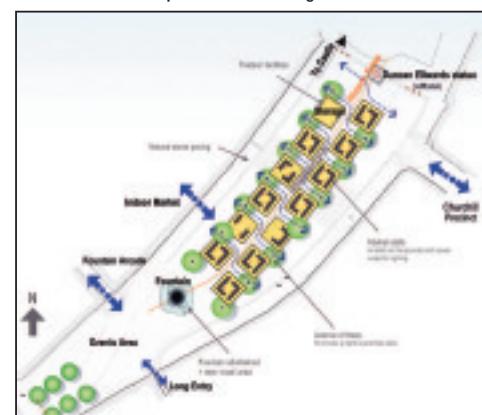
The rest of the money is coming from council capital receipts and once the funding is secured, work on the redevelopment could get under way by the middle of next year, with completion expected in summer 2013.

Opportunities

Councillor Jones said: "Dudley's market place is the only one of its kind in the region to be located in the heart of a town's high street, so the makeover is the fundamental showpiece project to the wider regeneration of Dudley town centre.

"We are very keen to hear what people think and there are certainly plenty of opportunities to take part in the consultation," he said.

"While we have presented three options, it may be that the final design could be different or could incorporate elements of each to



One of the three plans that are part of the public consultation

breathe the fresh life into the existing market place, to create a continual market boulevard."

Three designs for a new market, with different stall layouts, have been drawn up and people are now being asked for their views on the proposals.

Councillor Jones said the market project was pivotal to a wider redevelopment of the town centre, which would include a revamp of Castle Hill.

"It is a lot of money to spend on just replacing the stalls and planting some trees, don't think it's going to make a difference and make people shop here again," he said.

The consultation runs until April 29. Information stands will be by the fountain from 10am to 3pm March 23 to 26, April 13 to 16 and on April 23.

The consultation form can also be filled in online at www.dudley.gov.uk

create a fourth option." But market trader, David Flavell, aged 50, who has a fruit and veg stall, said he feared the revamp would not be enough to lure shoppers back into the town.

Planting

"It is a lot of money to spend on just replacing the stalls and planting some trees, don't think it's going to make a difference and make people shop here again," he said.

The consultation runs until April 29. Information stands will be by the fountain from 10am to 3pm March 23 to 26, April 13 to 16 and on April 23.

The consultation form can also be filled in online at www.dudley.gov.uk

MP hits at move over top officer

A WEST Midlands Labour MP has condemned the "grotesque paradox" of Government plans to raise the pension age of police – as scores of senior officers such as Sandwell's Steve Dugmore are being forced to retire early to cut costs.

Warley MP John Spellar said it was the "economics of the madhouse".

Chief Supt Dugmore, head of Sandwell Police, is being retired next month, aged only 48, in a cull of 300 senior officers by West Midlands Police Authority.

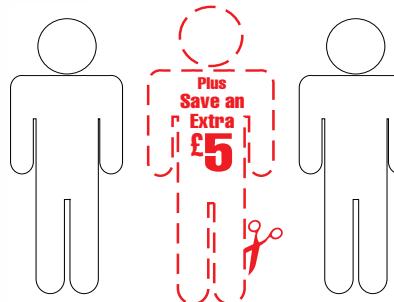
But the Government-commissioned Hutton Report called for the normal age at which most public sector staff can start drawing their pension to be increased to be the same as the state pension age.

Mr Spellar told the Commons it was a "grotesque paradox".

He said West Midlands Police were acting under a Home Office diktat because of a rule that allowed them to "sack people" after 30 years' service. Mr Spellar said: "Is that not absolutely absurd?"

Mr Spellar said afterwards: "You have got the Hutton Report saying that police in uniform have to serve longer – and you have the Home Office forcing West Midlands Police to sack people early and paying them their pensions."

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Wake up to national bed month at William & Sons

If you're not getting as much rest as you need, try following these simple tips to help yourself to get a better night's sleep.

Keep regular hours. Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time, all the time, will programme your body to sleep better. Choose a time when you are most likely to feel sleepy.



William & Son's extensive bedding department

Create a restful sleeping environment. Your bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep and it should be neither too hot, nor too cold; and as quiet and dark as possible.

Make sure your bed is comfortable. It's difficult to get deep, restful sleep on one that's too soft, too hard, too small or your existing bed no longer offers the comfort or support it once did.

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Try to relax before going to bed. Have a warm bath, listen to some quiet music, do some yoga, practise some visualisation techniques - all help to relax and prepare the mind and body for sleep.

Deal with worries or a heavy workload by making lists of things to be tackled the next day.

Take more exercise. Regular, moderate exercise such as swimming or walking can help relieve the day's stresses and strains. But not too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake!

Cut down on stimulants such as caffeine in tea or coffee - especially in the evening. They interfere with falling asleep and prevent deep sleep. Have a hot milky drink or herbal tea instead.

Don't over-indulge. Too much food or alcohol, especially late at night, just before bedtime, can play havoc with sleep patterns. Alcohol may help you

fall asleep initially, but will interrupt your sleep later on in the night.

Don't smoke. Yes, it's bad for sleep, too: smokers take longer to fall asleep, wake more often and often experience more sleep disruption.

If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again - then go back to bed.

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The Sleep Council, High Corn Mill, Chapel Hill, Skipton, BD23 1NL
Tel: 0845 058 4595.
www.sleepcouncil.com



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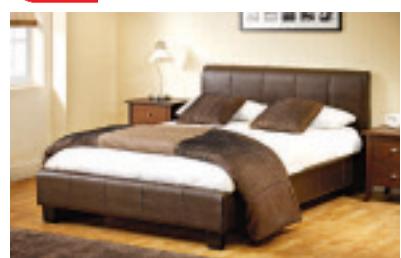
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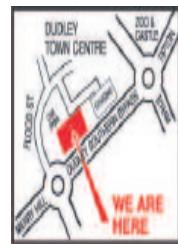
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Farewell said with flowers

TWO stalwarts of a Kinver pharmacy are retiring after nearly 70 years' National Health Service work between them.

Ann Williams and Gail Davies, who both live close to Bills Pharmacy in High Street, were presented with champagne and flowers in appreciation of their service.

Before delivering prescriptions to customers from the pharmacy, Mrs Williams was a midwife for nearly 50 years. She has a wide variety of interests including the local operatic society and fundraising for her local church.

"I've enjoyed every minute of my life," she said. "Everybody knows me and it's been wonderful helping patients with their prescriptions after spending all those years delivering babies as well!"

Mrs Davies has worked nearly 20 years for Bills Pharmacy after many years as a voluntary social worker. She will continue her voluntary work and spend time with her daughter in Cambridgeshire. She praised the pharmacy's "wonderful family atmosphere" and will miss the customers.

Manager Michelle Chandler said: "We pride ourselves on the team spirit that exists here and I know everyone will genuinely miss Ann and Gail."



Ann Williams, left, and Gail Davies, right, get flowers and champagne from Michelle Chandler, centre. Back from left are colleagues Sarah Humphries, Gemma Haynes, Ann Reeves and Jacqueline Wilton.

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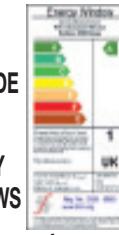
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Choir spots filling up for Dusty night

NUMBERS are filling up as residents of Dudley borough join a tribute to pop and soul great Dusty Springfield.

Musical director Matthew Jones, of Matthew Jones Music Ltd, is forming a choir to take part in the concert at London's Royal Albert Hall.

The concert, For Dusty, will celebrate her life and music and raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Around half of the Birmingham-based choir have been found, and now only 50 people aged 16 and above are needed.

The Birmingham choir, along with one from London, will back a full orchestra and a host of stars past and present at the event.

Mr Jones, aged 25, said: "People of all ages and abilities can take part. I'm a big believer that everyone can learn to sing."

Important

The concert acknowledges Springfield's battle with breast cancer, and Macmillan Cancer Support is a very important charity to Mr Jones.

"My mum died at 47 with cancer, so it's something that's very close to my heart," he said.

Choir rehearsals begin next month in Erdington, Birmingham.

The concert is on Thursday, May 5 and coach travel will be provided. Details: Matthew Jones Music Ltd on 0121 6322330 or 07941 918688.

Dare pair the cat's whiskers

TWO daredevil volunteers with the Stourbridge and District Branch of Cats Protection will dive with danger to raise funds.

Fleur Daykin, from Stourbridge, will walk across a 20-foot bed of red-hot coals at RAF Cosford in Shropshire on Saturday (March 26).

Fleur, a volunteer cat fosterer with the charity since April 2010, hopes to raise £1,000. Then Hayley Morgan, from Wollaston, takes the plunge on April 23 with a tandem skydive at Whitchurch.

Fleur, a volunteer cat fosterer since December 2009, hopes to raise £750. Sponsor forms are available at Cats Protection's shop in Lower High Street. Or visit www.justgiving.com/fleur4cats and www.justgiving.com/Hayleybombai

Training centre jobs booster

A £250,000 training centre will open in Ipton, creating 14 new jobs.

The Railway Street site, in Great Bridge, will be run by Dudley Training Ltd., a private company owned by Dudley College.

It will deliver courses in gas engineering as well as electrical and construction trade skills.

The centre, once complete, will be called the Energy Training Hub.

Solar

It is envisaged that seven full-time posts and seven part-time roles would be created at the hub, which will also cover environmental technologies, such as solar engineering.

Bob Chapman, director of learning at the college, said: "The investment in the centre would be almost £250,000 including all the kit, but not including the staff.

"It's going to be called the Energy Training Hub when it's finished. It will create 14 jobs."

Courses at the centre will tie in with the college's new accolade as part of the National Academy for Environmental Technologies.

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Roll up to see new rock house

Visitors asked for ideas on contents

KINVER'S famous rock houses have re-opened to the public – with a new addition to tempt visitors to the dwellings in the sandstone hillside.

Martindales House had been sealed off since 1950, when the last family to live there moved out and it was declared unfit for habitation. The building is named after the Martindale family who lived there and is next to the Holy Austin rock houses in Compton Road. The ceiling has been bolted into the rock so it is safe to open to the public.

Memorabilia

The National Trust is asking visitors to suggest what they might like to see inside Martindales so that it could, in future, be equipped with memorabilia.

Mike Parker, custodian of the rock houses for the National Trust, said: "Martindales has two rooms – a parlour and a bedroom.

"Like the neighbouring Holy Austin houses, it had no running water or electricity. While it might have been considered a nice place to live compared to the back-to-backs of the Black Country 100 years ago, by the 1950s it was not suitable for habitation."

The houses are open from 2-4pm Thursdays to Sundays until the end of November.



Mike Parker, National Trust custodian, at the Martindales rock house



Mike Parker inside the unfurnished bedroom of the Kinver rock house

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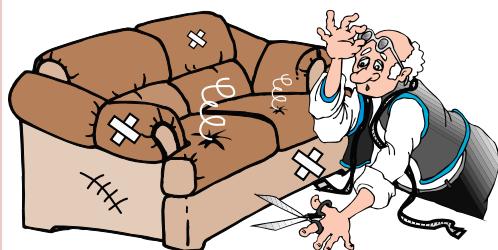
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thechronicle



Swimmer Sharron Davies with Stourbridge students



Derek Redmond joins some of the Stourbridge College representatives

The Olympic dream: Stars pass on torch

STUDENTS from Stourbridge College were among more than 1,000 teenagers who travelled to London to learn about the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Former Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies and athlete Derek Redmond, plus 2012 long jump hopeful Jade Johnson, helped bring the trip to life.

The 2012 Sporting Legacy event was hosted by broadcaster Garry Richardson and organised by school trips operator Adaptable Travel.

Crucial

The day included presentations and activities at the Emirates Stadium while pupils also had the chance of a guided tour round some of the 2012 Olympic venues.

Swimmer Sharron Davies, MBE, who first swam for Britain at the age of 11, said: "Introducing sport to children at a young age is crucial in creating future stars, but this event was a lot more than that.

"It really investigated the values that make up an Olympic Champion and how those values can be transferred into all aspects of life."

Athletes gave presentations about the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and shared experiences about their past.

The 400m runner Derek Redmond gave a key insight into how he, Roger Black, John Regis and Kris Akabusi won the 4x400m men's relay final in the 1991 Tokyo World Championships by beating the favourites, USA, by four-hundredths of a second.

Stourbridge College principal Lynette Cutting said: "Listening to all the athletes speak so passionately about their experiences was really inspiring for the students."

Excited

"The trip has enabled teachers to introduce the Olympics to their curriculum learning and makes the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games relevant to the classroom."

Daniel Charles, a student at Stourbridge College, said: "The best thing about the Olympics is that it brings together everyone in one place every four years for an event where everyone is totally focused on sport."

"I'm really excited that it will be taking place in London."

The 2012 Sporting Legacy event returns in November 2011. Details www.adaptabletravel.co.uk



Jade Johnson spoke of her Olympic hopes



Derek Redmond shares his memories with students at the seminar



Sharron Davies with Stourbridge College pair Jaime Johnson, left, and Stephen Goodman



Long jump star Jade Johnson, second from right at the back, with pupils from Penn Hall Special School, Wolverhampton

The big switch to digital TV happens in **SEPTEMBER**

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get set for digital 

Pet reunion proves bunny coincidence



Jodie Jones, of Wombourne, with her rabbit Tuloola and her brother Cameron

A RUNAWAY rabbit has been reunited with its owners after going missing for three days.

Tuloola, a Netherland dwarf rabbit, escaped from Beverley Jones's garden in St Bride's Close, Wombourne, on March 4.

The mother-of-four put an advert in the Express & Star appealing for information but three days later, the four-month-old bunny turned up in the garden of a woman living in the village, who then happened to go into the nearby Beddow Fishing Tackle shop where Miss Jones's 16-year-old son Cameron was on work experience.

Gobsmacked

Miss Jones, aged 50, said today: "I couldn't believe it when it turned out to be Tuloola. I was gobsmacked."

The woman who found Tuloola lived in Brimel Court, which means the rabbit must have travelled almost a mile from its home.

Miss Jones bought Tuloola and sister Flopsy as Christmas presents for her 10-year-old daughter Jodie. "We are all so pleased to have her back," she said.



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Mayors join tea dance for charity



Among the dancers are, from left, deputy Mayor of Dudley Councillor Michael Evans, Mayress and Mayor of Walsall Yvonne and Gary Clarke, Consort Krysta McCordle and her husband, Chairman Robert McCordle, with, front, Mayress and Mayor of Dudley Hilary Miller and Councillor Peter Miller

MAYORS from two Black Country towns were joined by fleet-footed residents at a recent tea dance to raise cash for charity.

The event at Kingswinford Community Centre was organised by Councillor Peter Miller, the Mayor of Dudley. About 30 residents showed off their dancing skills to steps including waltz and foxtrot.

All proceeds will go to the Mayor's chosen charities for 2010/11, the Thomas Pocklington Trust, Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge, Acorns Children's Hospice and the Alzheimer's Society.

In between dances during the two-hour

event, people could sit and have a chat over a cup of tea and a cake. Councillor Miller invited Councillor Gary Clarke, the Mayor of Walsall, and his wife Yvonne, along with the chairman of South Staffordshire Council Robert McCordle and wife Krysta.

Worthy

Councillor Miller said: "It was an excellent day and everyone had a very good time.

"This is just one of a series of events we have to raise money for these very worthwhile charities." More than £100 is thought to have been raised through ticket prices.

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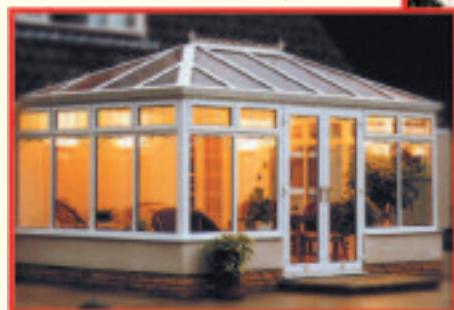
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Fears on local radio service

THE output of local radio stations such as BBC WM could be replaced with that of Radio 5 Live, it has been claimed.

The idea, that would affect all programmes except breakfast and drive time, is thought to be among the BBC's cost-cutting measures to help it save £400 million following the freeze of the TV licence fee last year.

The BBC has denied any decisions have been made.

Trade union leaders have warned more than 700 jobs could go across the country if the cuts are brought in.

Quality

National Union of Journalists general secretary Jeremy Dear said: "Local radio plays a crucial role in keeping local communities informed. These proposals would rip the heart out of local programming and effectively sound the death knell for local radio."

The BBC has around 40 local radio stations with a combined average weekly audience of 7.4 million listeners.

Last year bosses called for regional stations to improve the "quality and originality" of their output.

BBC WM covers the Black Country and Birmingham.

It was launched in 1970 and is known for its popular presenters such as the breakfast show's Phil Upton and drive time's Paul Franks. A BBC spokesman said: "No decisions have been made so it would be wrong to speculate."

Pop into a shop plan as public loos axed

TOILETS in shops and other buildings in the Dudley borough could be opened up for use by the public under plans which are being considered by council chiefs. The authority aims to save £150,000 by closing public toilets in some of the smaller shopping centres but today said "alternative toilet provision" was being investigated.

That could include securing permission for shoppers to be allowed to nip in to use the conveniences in supermarkets or council buildings such as libraries. Cabinet member Councillor Angus Adams said: "As part of the budget proposals, we are currently reviewing public toilets in a number of our town centres."

Fishing ban at Leasowes pool

FISHING is being banned at a park in Halesowen amid claims that wildlife is being harmed by dumped rubbish and equipment.

A community group claims two ducks have died at The Leasowes in recent months after getting caught up in fishing wire.

They claim that some of the vegetation is being ruined as well and needs time to recover without being trampled on. But anglers who use the site are

furious and say that the majority of them act responsibly.

The Friends of Leasowes say they hope fishing can be re-introduced at some time in the future. A timescale for the ban has not been set.

Marianne Diller, Friends chairman, said: "The regular park users and wardens are constantly picking up discarded lines, hooks, cans and general litter, all of which are potentially harmful to wildlife."

"As part of the review we will be looking at alternative toilet provision for members of the public. We are looking at supermarkets and also council buildings such as libraries. We will talk to supermarkets to see if they are amenable, I think it is the way forward."

Vandalism

Talks are ongoing about which public toilets could shut under the plans.

Figures released last month show that more than a third of public toilets have been closed in the Dudley borough over the last decade.

Eight out of the 23 public conveniences provided 10 years ago have now been shut. Vandalism at some of the sites was blamed for the closures.

Knock, knock, knockout cash



MEMBERS of a domino team based in Dudley have raised more than £200 in memory of one of their players who died last year.

The Kingswinford British Legion domino team, which plays in the Stourbridge and District League on Tuesday nights, organised a domino knockout competition in memory of Audrey Lea from Wordsley who died in January last year at the age of 67.

Mrs Lea, together with her husband Barry who is still in the club, were licensees of several pubs including the Garibaldi in Stourbridge and the Bird in Hand and the Vine, both in Wordsley.

The team raised £210 at the competition and donated the money to the Lung Function Unit at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital as Mrs Lea had suffered severe lung problems.

Residents are concerned that the issue is not being tackled by Dudley Council – especially in recurring problem areas.

In total there were 1,000 incidents reported to the authority between April and December last year.

Flats

The council says it acts as a "mediator" for these incidents and takes action when necessary. It claims surveys show three-quarters of people who complain to the council are happy with the response they get.

But residents on Dudley's Russells Hall Estate say tougher measures are needed.

They say nuisance centred around some of the 12 blocks of flats in Osprey Drive is "ruining" the neighbourhood.

Resident Doreen Law, 45, said: "We've called the council a few times and nothing much has been done."

Councillor David Simms, cabinet member for housing, said: "Our response will always be reasonable and proportionate to the individual circumstances of each issue."

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It's full steam ahead on SVR

A £500,000 improvement scheme on the Severn Valley Railway is nearing completion after new platforms were built and tracks realigned.

Work has been taking place at Arley and Bewdley stations since January, forcing the partial closure of the historic railway which receives thousands of visitors every year.

Railway chiefs said the project was due to be finished on time and the line is scheduled to reopen fully on Saturday (March 26) as planned.

Work to improve drainage at Arley station has been finished and decaying platforms replaced. Three test walls were built before the new platforms were constructed to ensure that they would fit in with the character of the station.

Brickwork

Tracks have been realigned and the signal boxes are now being reconnected – the last phase of the scheme.

In Bewdley, signalling equipment and tracks were removed from the top of the 10-arch viaduct in Station Road.

Workers then dug into the top of the structure to the arches' brickwork and laid new waterproof material to strengthen the viaduct. A new layer of concrete was put down and timber sleepers, dating back to 1948 when the Great Western Railway laid the track.

Grunt and grapple at centre

A NIGHT of wrestling will be held at a Black Country leisure centre on Saturday (March 26).

Stars of the Alternative Wrestling World company will make their debut at Haden Hill Leisure Centre in Cradley Heath.

The venue has seen its fair share of action over the years, including visits by UK wrestling stars Big Daddy and The British Bulldog – Davey Boy Smith.

And on Saturday the current AWW British Tag

Team Champions – Carnatio – will defend their titles against the number one contenders.

Also scheduled to appear are top UK wrestlers MK Mikian, "Tomcat" Kevin O'Neil, Dan Ryder, "Assassin" Dave Williams and the current AWW British Champion – Maddog Maxx.

Tickets for the night are available from the Barrs Road leisure centre priced £7 in advance or £8 on the door. The event will get under way at 6pm.

College campus work nearing completion



Project manager Gordon McCartin and site manager Paul Davis are pictured onsite at the developing Brierley Hill campus of Stourbridge College

Walks to visit beauty spots

A FESTIVAL of walks through a range of beauty spots in Dudley borough will get underway next month.

The Dudley Walking Festival will feature more than 20 walks at nature reserves, parks and canal towpaths across the borough.

It will run from April 23 and finish on May 1.

Venues for the walks include Himley Park, Wrens Nest National Nature

Reserve, Dudley; The Leasowes, Halesowen; Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge; Netherton Park; Wordsley; Priory Park, Dudley; Saltwells, Netherton; Baggeridge, Sedgley; Huntingtree, Halesowen; Silver Jubilee Park, Coseley and Cotwall End, Sedgley.

Most of the walks are free and people can view the brochure online at www.dudley.gov.uk, pick up a copy from local libraries or leisure centres or call 0300 555 2345.

THIS new picture shows how work on a new college campus in Brierley Hill is moving closer to completion.

Contractors expect to finish the external construction work on the Stourbridge College development in time for a topping-out ceremony tomorrow (March 25).

It will mark the installation of the last tile on the roof. Workers will then move on to fitting the windows before starting work on the interior. The building is already dominating the skyline at the old Brierley Hill School site off Venture Way.

Work began in September last year on the new creative industries campus, which will offer arts and digital-based courses.

College spokeswoman Mags Wintrop said: "It is very exciting. Everyone is looking forward to it opening in September." The college will house up to 1,000 students and replace the Longlands campus in Stourbridge.

An original £31million scheme, on the old Brierley Hill School site, was scaled back after the Learning and Skills Council withdrew £15m of pledged funding.

Trappings of mayor's office go on display in library

ROBES, medals and the mayoral mace were due to be on display at a talk in Tipton today (March 24).

John May, from the mayor's office at Sandwell Council, was speaking at the event in Tipton Library, in Unity Walk, at 10.30am. He was discussing what holding the ceremonial position entails.

Grant aid gives a boost to mental health group

A BLACK Country branch of a mental health charity has set up self-help groups using a £1,000 grant.

The Stourbridge-based area headquarters for the charity Dudley Mind has been handed the cash by Dudley Primary Care Trust.

An initial £1,000 grant has been awarded so the groups can get under way in the Stourbridge, Dudley and Halesowen areas.

Anxiety

The charity is running groups to help people with mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and post-natal depression.

Dates and times have not yet been arranged but sessions will be at the charity's base at the Mary Stevens Centre in Hagley Road, Stourbridge.

Chief executive Martin Mueller said: "Past experience shows how helpful these groups can be."



Stroll into springtime

ASPRING WALK at a Dudley nature reserve on Saturday (March 26) will look for the first signs of the new season.

Walkers should meet at Brockwood Animal Sanctuary car park, on the corner on Cotwall End Road and Catholic Lane, Sedgley.

The event has been organised by the Friends of Cotwall End Valley.

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'Jentle Jazz' kicking off at footy ground



Jazz musician Bobby Johnson who is playing at Stourbridge Football Club

MUSICIAN Bobby Johnson has kicked off a new series of jazz concerts at a football club in the Black Country.

The next performance by Bobby Johnson's Jentle Jazz band will be at Stourbridge FC's War Memorial ground in

High Street, Amblecote on Sunday, April 17.

Mr Johnson, aged 80, has previously held jazz sessions at the Broadway Inn in Norton but was forced to find another venue when the pub shut last month.

The first concert at the new venue was last Sunday.

Saxophone and trombone player Mr Johnson, from Richmond Grove, hopes the sessions will now become a monthly event.

Two parking tickets a day at the hospital

MORE THAN 130 parking tickets were handed out to staff, visitors and patients at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital in two months, new figures reveal.

Motorists caught flouting the rules by parking inappropriately or on red lines are fined £15.

In January hospital bosses painted further red lines around the staff car parks to show workers where they can and

cannot leave their cars as part of controversial new parking arrangements. It followed the introduction of red lines elsewhere, including by the A&E department.

Hospital figures show that between January 1 and February 28, 131 fines were handed out. If not paid within 14 days, the fee is increased to £30.

Chief executive Paula Clark said: "Car parking facilities at Russells Hall Hospital are provided by Summit Healthcare (Dudley) Ltd and managed by Interserve.

"There is a fixed penalty notice system in place for patients, visitors and staff who park their vehicles inappropriately.

"Notices warning people are clearly displayed."

In January, plans to introduce a staff parking permit scheme were thrown into chaos because of a dispute over who was allowed a space. Everyone has now been granted temporary access to staff car parks on a first-come, first-served basis. Bosses are monitoring traffic flow and assessing permit applications.

Tractors will line streets

CLASSIC and vintage tractors will line the streets of Bridgnorth as part of an annual extravaganza next month.

Visitors can glimpse the classic machines as part of the 13th annual Shropshire Tractor Run on April 10.

The event is being organised by the Bridgnorth Vintage Machinery Club, which has been based in and around the town since 1986.

More than 80 tractor enthusiasts from across the country are expected to take part. Details at www.bvmc.org.uk

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Devout Roman Catholic Frank talks to Prince Charles at Clarence House to celebrate 400 years of the King James Bible

Frank is relishing a return to stand-up

FRANK Skinner's return to our television screens with topical comedy show *Frank Skinner's Opinionated* was met with a fanfare last year – and rightly so.

Despite popping up on the odd programme here and there, it had been five years since he'd presented a regular TV slot and the fact it was immediately recommissioned for a further two series proves how much he'd been missed, writes **Susan Griffin**.

"I'd done lots of other people's things and there's something lovely about that because you can turn up, be funny and then go home," said 54-year-old Skinner.

When we meet to talk about the new series, a blue-suited Skinner is already tucking into a plate of spaghetti. He apologises profusely, adding: "If I don't eat now, I never will."

Despite his hiatus from TV, he says he didn't feel any pressure about returning.

"It's very exciting making a television series," he says.

"That might sound unsurprising news but I think a lot of people forget that."

Perhaps he'd forgotten that too, when his TV contracts ended in 2005, but with *Opinionated* he could focus on everything he enjoys doing, namely stand-up, audience interaction and having banter with fellow comedians.

"The idea of *Opinionated* is like pub conversation," says Skinner. "I

throw in some facts and figures but I like the fact people talk completely erroneously about a topic.

"The original pilot we did was a bit more political and then about two minutes in I thought, 'Oh no, I just want to do jokes', so I've learnt my lesson," he says with a grin.

Skinner, who lives in London with his partner Cathy Mason, will tour the length and breadth of the country to film the shows.

"Not everyone thinks of London as the centre of the world and on *Opinionated* it isn't, because we're very much 'out there'."

Born Christopher Collins in West Bromwich (he reportedly changed his name to that of a man in his dad's pub dominoes team), he left school with no qualifications and worked in a metal factory before enrolling in night school.

It was during a trip to



Frank with his girlfriend, former management company receptionist Cathy Mason

the Edinburgh Festival that he experienced his "road to Damascus moment" and at the age of 30 spent £400 of his £435 savings on booking a stand-up venue.

Encore

Recalling one of his early shows, he says: "I was so frightened of the audience – they were horrible and I just lost it. I gave up any pretence of liking them, started shouting and they were peeing themselves laughing. I got an encore, which I'd never had before.

"I learnt to be myself up there, and cast caution to the wind."

In 1991, he won the Perrier Award (other nominees included Jack Dee, Lily Savage and Eddie Izzard) and hasn't looked back since.

By the end of the 1990s, he was one of TV's biggest stars thanks to *Fantasy Football League*, which he wrote and presented with good

mate David Baddiel, and *The Frank Skinner Show*, widely credited for setting the tone for the comedic chat show.

For someone who's been accused of being crude and misogynistic in the past (he's denied this and said: "My stand-up's about sex rather than being sexist and I'm the fall guy in every routine"), he comes across as utterly charming in person. He is a devout Catholic. Recently he attended the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible at Clarence House in London, where he spoke to Prince Charles about his faith.

When Baddiel And Skinner Unplanned ended in 2005, Frank began work on a novel called *Thunderman* And Geoff Phillips, about a superhero duo.

"I'd been doing three TV series a year and I thought I'd become a recluse, write this novel and re-emerge in a year's time to people saying, 'What? He's a Booker nominee and he used to be a comedian?' That's how I saw it." Skinner laughs – he gave up after 60,000 words.

"I'd like to do small clubs again – like I used to. I was very, very happy," Frank says. "Now I want to do things simply for pleasure."

Frank Skinner's *Opinionated* begins on BBC Two tomorrow (Friday), March 25.

Free tickets to the recordings can be booked through the website www.tvrecordings.com



Lenny Henry – brushing up on his Shakespeare

Shakespeare role for Lenny at the National Theatre

DUDLEY star comedian Lenny Henry is returning to dramatic acting and this time will be appearing at one of the world's most prestigious theatre venues.

Lenny, who was the main presenter for the BBC's record-breaking *Comic Relief* night on Friday – which raised more than £74.4million – will be making his debut at the National Theatre, on London's South Bank, in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* later this year.

Prize

The former Dudley Blue Coat School pupil, who found fame on *New Faces* and *Tiswas* in the 1970s, made his stage drama debut in 2009, also in Shakespeare, playing Othello. He won the Outstanding Newcomer prize at the Evening Standard Awards after his debut in Northern Broadsides' production, which transferred from West Yorkshire Playhouse to the Trafalgar Studios in London's West End.

Lenny, who was awarded the CBE for services to charity in 1999, will be directed by Dominic Cooke, artistic director of the Royal Court, and the production aimed at family audiences will be staged at the National Theatre's Olivier Theatre from November through the festive period.

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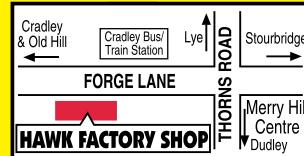
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the pulse



Enrique Iglesias

Euphoria for Enrique with concert date

SPAIN'S biggest pop star, Enrique Iglesias, is in concert at the LG Arena on Saturday, after releasing his ninth studio album, Euphoria, last summer.

The son of crooner Julio Iglesias and journalist Isabel Preysler, Madrid-born Enrique moved to Miami when still a child and kept his musical ambitions secret while studying business at university.

His debut album in 1995 sold half a million copies in the first week and instantly established him as a major star in the Spanish-speaking music world, from Madrid to Mexico City.

In 1999 he scored a No1 in the US singles chart with Bailamos. His first English language album, Enrique, confirmed his crossover success in the global pop market, particularly when Be With You became his second no1.

Iglesias went on to even greater success when his 2001 album Escape provided his most well known song, Hero, his first UK chart-topper.

He has gone on to release his greatest hits album, flirt with a movie career and has been in a relationship with tennis star Anna Kournikova for 10 years. No wonder he has experienced Euphoria.

McFly set to make a noise

MCFLY bring their Above The Noise Tour to the LG Arena on Wednesday, March 30. The power pop quartet's new EP That's The Truth is now available and fans going to their NEC concert can get all the latest information on the band from their relaunched Super City site at www.mcfly.com



Why Westlife feel like a real band once again

THE OFFICIAL biggest selling group of the past decade, Irish boy-turned-man band Westlife, are at the LG Arena tomorrow (Friday) for the Birmingham leg of their nine city UK arena tour.

Westlife are among the world's most prolific touring acts, with nine sell-out tours already under their belts, including playing to a full house at the legendary Croke Park in Dublin.

They have sold more tickets at London's Wembley Arena than any other act and have played a record number of dates there, an amazing 25.

No pop band can compare to Westlife's extraordinary success, having been certified as the biggest selling band of the past decade.

During their 11 years at the top of pop's hierarchy, the band have sold more than 43 million records globally. In the UK alone, they have scored ten multi-platinum albums and a record breaking 14 No.1 hits (behind only Elvis Presley and The Beatles).

The LG Arena show will include the foursome's biggest hits as well as tracks off their 2009 double platinum album Where We Are and their latest album, Gravity.

The quartet's eleventh offering, Gravity, released last November, sees the Irishmen sail

into uncharted waters, wrestle an unprecedented level of creative control and most critically of all – start believing in themselves again.

"It's a really good album," insists Nicky Byrne. "It's one producer. It's one sound. Maybe it's taken us 12 years to get there. But it doesn't matter. We're here now."

"It's the kind of record we knew we could make and we just needed the right person to deliver it with us."

And that individual was legendary producer John Shanks. He steered Take That's past two

collections, was responsible for Bon Jovi's recent reinvention and sculpted some of Kelly Clarkson, Celine Dion and Sheryl Crow's most enduring hits.

Nicky recalls: "From day one John said, 'I'm not going to be ringing Shane up and saying I want him in on Wednesday lunchtime and Kian in on Friday morning.'

"If I'm going to do this, we're all going to be in the studio together."

"That was the first time anyone had ever said that to us. He made us feel like a real band again."



Westlife's Kian, Shane, Mark and Nicky are all smiles as they prepare for their concert at the LG Arena



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YOUR EIGHT-PAGE ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE AND WEEK'S TV VIEWING



Theatre and show round-up – page 25

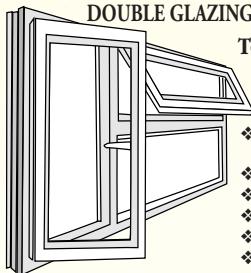


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Rob Rouse

Stand up joy ...

ROB Rouse has been on the edge of stardom for a while now. He was an original presenter of Channel 4's *The Friday Night Project* and has appeared on *8 Out of 10 Cats*, *Spoons and Growups*.

However, stand-up is where he feels most at home. In May, he starts his second nationwide tour.

He said: "Touring is the best thing in the world. To have audiences coming to the gig just for you is a very special feeling."

Rob recently moved from London to a Peak District village, and his show documents his struggles with the move.

Rob's *Great Escape* tour visits Wolverhampton Slade Rooms on May 10, tickets are £12.

... but Jim gets none

CONTROVERSIAL comedian Jim Davidson has axed his play, *Stand Up and Be Counted*, which was due to be performed in Wolverhampton, due to poor ticket sales.

It is the 57-year-old's first self-penned play, in which he stars as ageing comedian Eddie Pierce. It was due at the Grand Theatre from April 4 to 9.

Helpings of dinners and dance on show

THE CANTEEN colleagues are back for a Second Helping when *Dinnerladies* returns in a new play featuring Victoria Wood's comic caterers at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday to the following Saturday.

Andrew Dunn and Sue Devaney from the original TV sitcom star as Tony and Jane and are joined by the rest of the familiar characters at HWD Electronics' staff cafe.

Tonight (Thursday) the *Lass That Loved A Sailor*, better known as *HMS Pinafore*, Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera will be brought to the Grand stage with lots of audacious British lads sailing the ocean blue in a production by Opera Delta Luna.

The one-nighters at the Grand continue with *That'll Be The Day's* 25th anniversary rock 'n' roll show on Saturday and John Hylton's tribute to Neil Diamond, entitled *Real Diamond*, on Sunday.

Tutu toting

The Trocks are back with more amazing frocks and the perfect show for those who had their taste for ballet whetted by Ade Edmondson's recent dying swan in *Let's Dance for Comic Relief*. These tutu toting divas are in a whole different class, having picked up dance awards for their routines. Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo will be at Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday to the following Saturday. Meanwhile, The Blues Brothers musical continues at the Hurst Street venue to Saturday.

The topless Aussie comedienne Emma Powell and Bev Killick do have their knockers but the bosom buddies are playing to enthusiastic female audiences, and the occasional brave man, on their UK tour, which calls at Birmingham Hippodrome this Sunday and Stourbridge Town Hall on Saturday, April 2.

And sisters are doing it for themselves in *The Naked Truth*, a poignant and comic tale about women joining a pole-dancing class to keep fit.

The all-star female cast includes Leanne Jones, who starred in *Hairspray* in the West End, former *Emmerdale* villain Claire King, Maureen Nolan and ex-*Liberty X* singer Michelle Heaton.

It's on at Stoke's Regent Theatre this week (to Saturday) and then visits the New Alex in Birmingham on April 26 and 27.

Corrie, an affection tribute cramming 50 years of top soap Coronation Street into a couple of hours, continues at Birmingham New Alexandra Theatre with its final performances in the city on Saturday.

Nobody's Perfect present the comedy *World Of Pain*,



The Trocks are back with more amazing frocks

Rugeley writer Phil Preece's sequel to his *House Of Pain*, tomorrow (Friday) at Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre.

Birmingham Rep, now on the road whilst its theatre is partly rebuilt, comes to the Arena on Monday with Lucy Caldwell's powerful new play about a dying child, *Notes To Future Self*. The play, the last directed for the Rep by outgoing artistic director Rachel Kavanaugh, won critical acclaim during its recent run in Birmingham.

Nostalgic humour

Crescent Theatre presents Tennessee Williams' steamy *US Deep South drama Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* at the theatre on Sheepcote Street in Birmingham to Saturday.

Midlands comics Don Maclean, Malcolm Stent and Dave Sealey team up for nostalgic humour in *Stent to Back at Dudley Concert Hall* on Thursday, March 31.

King Lear, Romeo and Juliet and a puppet version of *The Tempest* are in the repertoire at the Royal Shakespeare Company's theatres in Stratford for the rest of this month.

Ready to rock ... and shock

THE Circus of Horrors is coming to town and is ready to rock and shock its audience.

The circus is now in its 15th year and is back in the UK showcasing its Four Chapters from *Hell* tour, which stops at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton on Friday, March 25.

The self-styled rock-and-roll circus is promising a show like never before.

Hannibal Helmuto, who is a performer with the Circus of Horrors, said: "It is very funny and fast paced, there is nothing like it in the world."

"Imagine if Quentin Tarantino had directed *Cirque du Soleil* and you'd only be halfway there."

Set in a French mental asylum, the show contains some of the most bizarre circus acts ever seen on stage. The cast of 26 perform stunts including dare-devil trapeze, sword swal-



Hannibal Helmuto

lowing, knife throwers and whirlwind roller-skaters. The Circus of Horrors explores the past, present and future, as well as involving zombies, vampires and the undead. The show is a sideways look at the circus and Helmuto certainly offers that, by hypnotising people with his ears.

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AND MANY MORE!

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

A Taste of Yorkshire

Our busy Itinerary takes in the fascinating areas of 'Last of the Summer Wine' and the location of many TV sets and international films.

ITINERARY

FRIDAY
Departing from around 6pm, we travel to our Holiday Inn Hotel.

SATURDAY

Take English Breakfast at leisure before we depart to Holmfirth. Here you will see Nora Batty's House and Sid's Café, familiar scenes from 'Last of the Summer Wine'.

We then travel to visit 'The Woolpack' and the village featured in the old 'Emmerdale' series.

From here we visit the original Harry Ramsden's Fish and Chip Shop - Lunch included!

We continue to the excellent Bradford Industrial Museum. Here you can see the Bradford transport collection, original Mill and working Horses.

We return to our Holiday Inn Hotel, where tonight you can wine and dine as we include Dinner with Choice Menu.

SUNDAY

After Breakfast, we make our way over the Moors to the world famous village of Haworth.

This is the home of the Brontë family, whose novels included *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. You can visit the Brontë Parsonage, or take Lunch at one of the Public Houses before we join the Keighley and Worth Valley Steam Railway for a journey to Keighley. This railway was featured in the films 'The Railway Children', 'Yanks', 'Sherlock Holmes' and of course 'Last of the Summer Wine'.

From Keighley, our Coach returns to the West Midlands.

HOLIDAY INN HOTEL ***

The Holiday Inn is situated just off the Trans-Pennine Motorway at Brighouse, West Yorkshire - famous for its Brass Band.

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- 2 Nights - Holiday Inn Hotel
- English Breakfasts
- Dinner - Choice Menu - Saturday
- Hotel Leisure Centre
- Summer Wine Tour
- Fish & Chip Lunch
- Bradford Industrial Museum
- Visit to Haworth
- Steam Train Journey



DEPARTURE DATES

FRIDAYS

	Price £
April 1	135.00
April 8	135.00
April 15	135.00
April 22	135.00
May 6	138.50
May 13	138.50
May 20	138.50
May 27	138.50
October 7	135.00
October 14	135.00
October 21	135.00
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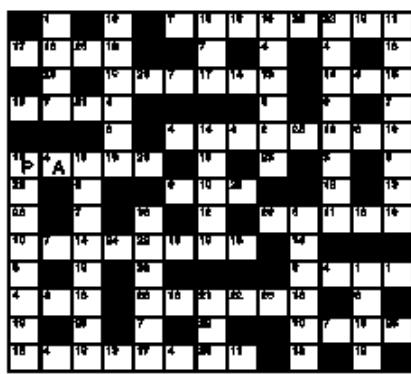


Brain Gym

No.109

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

D	P	Y	H	B	R	E	F	K	Q	A	C	W
Z	M	X	T	G	N	V	S	L	J	I	O	U

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Monkey World Ape
Rescue Centre

Two days departing June 11, Aug 13

★ PRICE FROM £99.95*

- £69.95 per child up to age of 15 sharing with an adult
- Return coach travel
- Oversleep half-board accommodation
- Entrance to Monkey World Ape Rescue Centre
- Tour of the New Forest
- Visit to Lyndhurst
- Services of a tour driver
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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Longleat Safari Park

Two days departing May 25, Aug 7, Oct 24

★ PRICE FROM £109*

- £79.95 per child aged 15 and under sharing with an adult
- Return coach travel
- Oversleep half-board accommodation
- Passport ticket for Longleat Safari Park
- Visit to Bath
- Services of a tour driver
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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See us online at www.expressandstar.com/starextratravelSuffolk Coastal
Villages and the
Beth Chatto Gardens

Three days departing June 17

★ PRICE FROM £149

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- Entrance to the Beth Chatto Gardens
- Tour of Constable Country
- Services of a tour driver
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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Three days
Various departure dates

★ PRICE FROM £119.95

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Circlegram

Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters within each circle can be rearranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION
The letter
represented by
the question
mark is A. Argyle
Saddles, Cheshire.
All answers correct.

ALL YOUR PUZZLE
NEEDS IN ONE
HANDY APP!

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Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S
SOLUTIONS

9	8	3	7	4				9
4	5		8	2				
1	2				5			
	4	6	7	8				
2						1		
6	8		4	5				
4	1	6		9				
9		5	3					

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PARKING AT THE REAR



Commercial Feature

Seal of approval for leading window firm

DESPITE the shrinking economy, one local company has grown to become one of the leading manufacturers of uPVC windows, doors and conservatories in the West Midlands.

Energy seal, based in Planetary Road, Wednesfield, has a 20-strong workforce, all of whom strive to be the very best in the industry in all areas.

This dedication to quality begins with excellent manufacturing of their window system, through to excellent customer service.

Family-run

The company is a family-run business with two brothers, David and Richard Carter, at the helm.

Director of sales, David, says: "We aim to give our customers the very best service the industry can offer.

"Through being involved directly with sales, we can develop a special relationship with customers the second their phone rings.

"Then, when our customers become confident they are buying their windows, doors or conservatories from the right company, we then get the project underway.

"Starting with a free technical survey of the work being carried out, we then project-manage everything from that point on.

"In our conservatories range we have many different options for our customers.

"We provide the finished article, starting with the base, brickwork, erecting the uPVC frames

and roof, right down to fitting electrics, tiling the floor and fitting vertical blinds.

"In our showroom, we have six full-sized conservatories fully-fitted with fixtures and fittings to show our customers exactly what they're buying in the local area."

Richard, trade director, adds: "When we started manufacturing, we had three employees. Three years on we now employ 10 fabricators, two fitting teams and six office staff.

"We are always looking to expand our business

YOUR HOME THIS WINTER



L-r: Sally Wynne, sales, Cathy Davidson, accounts, Adrian Jackson, director, Zoe Carter, reception, Jane Carter, ops manager



Customers can choose from a wide range of conservatories in the firm's showroom



This Wednesfield-based company strives for top quality at each stage of manufacturing

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Terms & conditions must apply

Chat over business breakfast

REGENERATION opportunities in Stourbridge are to be discussed at a networking breakfast.

It will be hosted by the Black Country and Telford branch of the Forum for the Built Environment (fbe) on March 29 at the Ruskin Glass Centre, Stourbridge.

Guest speakers will be Tony Hyde, group managing director of construction firm Thomas Vale Group; Elaine Giles, vice-principal of Stourbridge College; and Andy Hughes, design manager from Interserve.

Philip Beale, chairman of the fbe committee for the Black Country and Telford branch, said: "The meeting will provide an opportunity to discover more about future regeneration in the area."

"The outstanding feedback from our previous events underlines the strong level of support from key industry influencers in this region."

The Stourbridge meeting runs at the centre in Wollaston Road, Amblecote, from 7.30-9.30am.

Flying start on training

STOURBRIDGE College travel and tourism students got off to a flying start by training with Thomson Airways at East Midlands Airport.

As part of a cabin crew training programme, students used specialist emergency equipment such as life rafts and entered a smoke-filled cabin in fire training.

Meals on wheels club for the elderly is axed

A STOURBRIDGE-BASED meals on wheels service for the elderly has been axed due to lack of funding.

The national WRVS charity is closing Carlisle Hall, in Victoria Street, and on March 31 staff will deliver the last batch of hot meals.

The announcement came after the head of WRVS services for the West Midlands revealed that the hall had been losing money for several years. Negotiations are under way to ensure that other luncheon clubs supplied from Carlisle Hall will receive an alternative supply.

In October last year the hall was battling to meet the £50,000 annual costs to provide its lifeline service to people across Dudley.

It was launched two years ago, following the end of Dudley Council's scheme, but has struggled to find sponsors to help them the fees. The £3.50 daily fee charged to 150 residents across the borough is failing to plug the funding gap.

By Sarah Hazelwood

s.hazelwood@expressandstar.co.uk

"The staff at the centre have been so lovely."

WRVS helps people to live healthier and happier lives. Sam Ward, its head of services for the West Midlands, said: "Despite the best efforts of our dedicated team at Carlisle Hall we have been losing money for a number of years, which means we've had to divert our charitable funds away from our community work. We work with limited resources and have to get the most out of every penny."

"Those lunch clubs in the area who receive meals from the service won't be affected by the ceasing of meals on wheels from the Carlisle Centre. We are in negotiations with an external supplier to provide meals to these clubs, with no increase in price."

Difference

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank the WRVS staff and volunteers at Carlisle Hall. They have made a big difference to the older people who have used the services."

Councillor Lesley Faulkner, Dudley Council cabinet member for adult and community services, said: "Although Dudley Council does not provide any funding to WRVS at Carlisle Hall, we are continuing to support people who use the service, to find alternative facilities in the Dudley borough."

Poster girl is court on camera

THE MODEL who was made famous when she posed as a cheeky tennis player hitching up her skirt has launched a new art exhibition.

Fiona Walker was at Christie's in London on Tuesday to launch Court on Canvas – an exhibition exploring tennis as a subject in art.

The original photograph was created by Martin Elliott in the summer of 1976 using a roll of Kodak film and some borrowed tennis equipment.

Girlfriend

Star of the shot was his then girlfriend, Fiona, from Stourbridge – who could not actually play tennis.

Mr Elliott took the picture at Edgbaston Tennis Club.

It was licensed to Athena and became an instant best-seller when first published as a calendar for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 – the year in which Virginia Wade won the Wimbledon ladies' singles.

Fiona went on to marry multi-millionaire Ian Walker and is now a resident of Stourport.

Court on Canvas runs from May 27 to September 18 at Birmingham's Barber Institute of Fine Arts.



Fiona Walker, the woman in the famous Athena poster, poses with an original copy at Christie's in London to launch the Court on Canvas exhibition

Jobless man in credit con bid

AN unemployed man tried to buy £1,000 worth of electrical goods from a Black Country branch of Argos using someone else's bank cards, a court heard.

Robert Sudra, aged 32, was given an eight-week prison sentence, suspended for 12 months, and a 12-month supervision order at Dudley Magistrates Court on Monday. He will also have to perform 200 hours of unpaid work.

Sudra, of Minstead Road, Erdington, pleaded guilty to charges of fraud, possession of items for use in a fraud, and possession of cannabis.

Statement

Mr Mark Cooper, prosecuting, told the court Sudra had gone into Argos in the Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Brierley Hill, on January 2 carrying two credit cards, a bank statement and a credit check print-out all bearing the name Daniel Barge.

He used them to get a store credit card to buy a laptop and television, both worth around £500, said Mr Cooper. He also signed a document using the name Daniel Barge.

Suspicion was raised during the credit check, and Argos staff were told to keep Sudra at the scene. He was arrested shortly afterwards.

Mr Shabre Qureshi, defending, said that Sudra was starting to get his life back on track.

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KINGS OF LEON

IN CONCERT AT THE RICOH ARENA, COVENTRY

DAY EXCURSION, 30 MAY 2011, FROM £82.50pp

Kings of Leon have announced details of a series of huge headline outdoor shows next Summer including an eagerly anticipated gig in Coventry.

Their highly acclaimed fifth album 'Come Around Sundown' became their third consecutive album to debut at number 1 when it topped the UK album charts on release, claiming both the biggest week one sales of the year and the biggest ever first week digital sales along the way.

Like last year's Hyde Park show, their forth-coming December 2010 arena shows sold out in seconds and the Kings of Leon's Summer 2011 concerts are set to be one of the highlights of next year's live calendar.



Price includes:

- A General Admission ticket with a face value of £45 for an evening performance of Kings of Leon Live 2011 at the Ricoh Arena, Coventry on the 30 May 2011
- Return coach travel from selected local departure points

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Number 49 Parkfield Road in Stourbridge has a driveway, large garage and good-sized level gardens with a patio and lawned area to the rear

The through lounge is spacious with French doors opening to the rear garden and a double-glazed bay window with stained glass

Home has extended kitchen

AN EXTENDED residence standing in a convenient position elevated from the road is now available through Wakeman estate agent.

The traditional semi at 49 Parkfield Road in Stourbridge is on the market for offers in the region of £169,950.

It has uPVC double-glazed windows and a good-sized level garden to the rear. Internally the gas centrally heated accom-

mmodation includes an enlarged re-fitted breakfast kitchen and spacious through dining area with a separate utility room.

From the recessed porch, the entrance hall is accessed through a stained glass door where a staircase leads to the first floor, a door opens to the understairs store cupboard and another to the dining area.

With a double-glazed French door and adjoining windows to garden, the lounge measures 24ft 3in x 11ft 5in.

At the rear is the breakfast kitchen with dimensions of 13ft 10in x 6ft 9in. Once upstairs, the landing has doors leading to the three bedrooms and a bathroom.

The main bedroom measures 14ft x 11ft, the second is 11ft 4in x 10ft 5in while the third bedroom's dimensions are 7ft 3in x 6ft while to the rear is the re-fitted bathroom.

Viewing is by appointment, visit www.wakeman-online.co.uk or call 01384 288 188 for further details.



This impressive traditional home has been extensively restyled to create a spacious and versatile living space

Breathtaking view from back of four-bed semi

LOCATED in a prime position with magnificent views over the Clee Hills and the Wrekin, this distinctive semi-detached house is described by the selling agent as a "superb example of a family home".

Pool Meadow Cottage, in West-beech Road, Pattingham, near Wolverhampton was originally constructed to a traditional design, but has been restyled to create a spacious and versatile living space.

The Wolverhampton branch of estate agent Thomas Harvey is managing the sale, inviting offers based on £359,000.

Approaching the house, which has gas central heating and double glazing fitted to the majority of rooms, lies back from the road behind a large asphalt driveway, surrounded by established trees, hedges and shrubs.

A large garage, with power, lighting, worktops and plumbing for a washing machine, has access to a spacious boarded and panelled loft, which could be utilised to create additional accommodation subject to planning permission. This area also houses the gas central heating boiler.

Entering through an arched canopy porch, there is a hallway with laminate flooring, stairs to the first floor and a guest WC with a store room.

Measuring 15ft 3in x 10ft, the front-facing dining room has a coved ceiling.



The garden has a large patio and lawn surrounded by shrubs and trees

The sitting room, with dimensions of 13ft 8in x 10ft, has a chimney breast with recessed gas flame-effect fire, a coved ceiling, recessed ceiling spotlights and a double-glazed window with a door to the rear garden. In what the agent describes as "charming" living room, measuring 15ft 8in x 13ft 8in, there is a fireplace with marble hearth and gas flame-effect fire and a patio window.

Stylish

There is a stylish matching range of wall and base units in the kitchen, which has dimensions of 10ft 6in x 9ft 1in and incorporates a stainless steel sink, dishwasher, free-standing cooker, fridge freezer and extractor

hood. On the first floor landing, the master bedroom measures 15ft 10in x 10ft 2in and has recessed ceiling spotlights. Bedroom two is 12ft x 10ft and has mirrored wardrobes, a shower cubicle and vanity unit.

The third bedroom measures 10ft 3in x 7ft 2in. In the bathroom, there is a corner suite with shower unit, vanity unit with built-in cupboards and a close-coupled WC. On the second floor there is a fourth bedroom measuring 15ft 8in x 16ft 4in.

At the rear of the house, the garden has a full-width patio with wall and pool, grapevine and lawn with a variety of shrubs and trees, surrounding hedging and fencing. Email properties@thomasharvey.co.uk or call 01902 758111 to arrange a viewing.

	WORDSLEY KINVER STREET	First Floor Flat, Lounge, Kitchen, One Bedroom, Bathroom, Unfurnished, Carpets & Curtains, Off Road Parking	£360 pcm
	WOODSETTON FLAVELL STREET	Terrace Property, Lounge, Dining Room, Kitchen, WC, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Carpets & Curtains, Rear Garden, Off Road Parking	£550 pcm
	BRIERLEY HILL DADFORD VIEW	Cluster Style Property, Lounge, Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom, Front & Side Garden, Allocated Parking, Double Glazing, DSS Considered	£460 pcm
	WALL HEATH NEWBRIDGE ROAD	Detached Bungalow, Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Unfurnished, Front & Rear Gardens, Off Road Parking	£650 pcm

	WOLLASTON KINGSWAY	Semi Detached Property, Lounge, Kitchen, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Unfurnished, Front, Side & Rear Gardens, Off Road Parking	£575 pcm
	KINVER FOSTER CRESCENT	Large Studio Flat, Lounge, Kitchen/Diner, Bedroom, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Side & Rear Garden	£395 pcm
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	BRIERLEY HILL FOXDALE DRIVE	Cluster Style Property, Lounge, Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, bathroom with shower, carpets & curtains, Unfurnished, Front & side gardens, DSS Considered	£460 pcm

	DUDLEY CORBY ROAD	Semi Detached Property, Lounge/Diner, Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Carpets & Curtains, Unfurnished, Front & Rear Gardens, Off Road Parking	£525 pcm
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	BRIERLEY HILL BAGLEY'S ROAD	Ground Floor Flat, Lounge, Kitchen, One Double Bedroom, Bathroom, Electric Heating, Double Glazing, Carpets & Curtains, Front Garden	£400 pcm
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	KINGSWINFORD RAGDES ROAD	Ground Floor Flat, Lounge, Kitchen, Bedroom, Bathroom, Electric Heating, Double Glazing, Carpets & Curtains, Unfurnished	£375 pcm
	KINGSWINFORD HAZEL ROAD	Semi Detached Property, Lounge, Kitchen/Diner, Store, Two Double Bedrooms, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Carpets & Curtains, Unfurnished, Front & Rear Gardens	£560 pcm
	COSELEY ROSEVILLE PRECINCT	First Floor Flat, Lounge, Kitchen, Double Bedroom, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Carpets & Curtains, Unfurnished	£360 pcm
	BRIERLEY HILL DADFORD VIEW	Cluster style property, Lounge, kitchen, bathroom with shower, two bedrooms, front garden, allocation parking, Carpets and curtains, Unfurnished	£460 pcm
	HALESOWEN BLADON ROAD	Ground Floor Flat, Large Lounge, Kitchen, Two Bedrooms, Bathroom, Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing, Carpets & Curtains, Unfurnished, Single Garage Available Immediately	£525 pcm
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- * Up to 6 bedrooms
- * Must be viewed

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- * Detached family house
- * Four bedrooms
- * Lounge & dining room
- * Conservatory
- * Double garage
- * Private road with wooded approach

Offers in the region of £475,000

HAGLEY



Worcester Road

- * Individual architect designed residence
- * Fitted kitchen/breakfast room with host of appliances
- * Granny suite
- * 4 Beds (2 with ensuite)
- * Double garage with electric door
- * Internal inspection highly recommended

Offers in the region of £725,000

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Spinners End Drive, off Upper High Street
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32 Spinners End Drive

- * Self contained ground floor flat
- * One bedroom
- * Living room with electric fire
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- * Bathroom

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33 Spinners End Drive

- * Ground floor flat
- * One bedroom with fitted wardrobe
- * Kitchen with host of appliances
- * White bathroom suite
- * Allocated car space

Monthly rent of £365

STOURBRIDGE Hagley



Flat 7 Chaddesley House Worcester Road

- * Superior quality ground floor flat
- * 2 bedrooms (master bedroom has en suite)
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MOTORING NEWS AND REVIEWS

CHRONICLE

MOTORING

powered by

Motoring editor Peter Carroll drives the new car which aims to put a famous Midlands marque back on the motoring map

MG that's out to show '6' appeal

WHEN the gates of Longbridge clanged shut in 2005, with the loss of 6,000 jobs, many must have thought that the death-knell had sounded for one of Britain's most famous car brands.

But six years down the line MG is still with us, albeit under Chinese ownership, and has just launched its long-awaited, first all-new car for 16 years.

The MG6 arrives in final production form as a family-sized five-seater hatchback with coupe-influenced styling and high levels of equipment across its trim levels.

Prices range from £15,495 for the entry level S to £18,995 for the flagship TSE – a car that is packed with such premium features as leather seats, climate control air conditioning, satellite navigation and a reversing camera, all as standard.

This makes the 6 cheaper to buy than similarly-specified rivals such as the Skoda Octavia or Ford Focus. The MG is also more spacious inside.

But perhaps the biggest surprise is that MG has delivered, as promised, a real driver's car with

sure-footed handling and a surprisingly sporty feel.

With its heavily-raked roofline and narrow windows the MG6 is very much a contemporary vehicle, with few 'retro' touches. I suspect its looks will grow on people. Saloon variants will arrive in the summer.

Inside, cabin quality is higher than that of the pre-production car I drove last year with an improved soft-touch dashboard, along with touches of chrome and carbon-fibre-style trim.

Badge

The famous octagonal badge is present and correct on the steering wheel but the overall interior look is slightly anonymous and the plastics are harder and cheaper the lower down you go.

The seats in the TSE are comfortable but on the soft side and lacking both lateral and under-thigh support. Leg room is generous but taller drivers may struggle for headroom.

The designer handbrake is similar to the Saab 9-3's 'thumbrapper' and a little awkward to operate.

There's only one power plant at the moment – a turbocharged 1.8 litre petrol developing 160hp. A 1.9 litre diesel is in development but won't be ready until next year.

The petrol is only going to give



Peter Carroll about to drive the first all new MG since the launch of the MGF roadster in 1995

you 30-35mpg but it sounds peppy and revs freely to above 6,000rpm.

The MG has only five, rather long gears, but can hit 60mph in around eight and a half seconds.

The car's top speed has been limited to 120mph in order to keep insurance costs down.

While the 6 is designed first and foremost as a family car it's also possible to have some fun in

it. The chassis feels rigid and taut and the car is stable and assured at speed. Provided you keep the revs up, it loves attacking twisty B-roads. There's masses of grip and very little roll. The steering has been set up to be considerably sharper and weightier than in the Chinese version of the car.

Ride quality is firm but comfortable and refinement levels are high, though you certainly hear

the engine if you put your foot down.

The car's interior could still be improved and its relatively high CO₂ emissions of 184g/km will not find favour with fleet buyers.

With no diesel in the range the MG6 is still a work in progress, at least as regards the European market, but at least it is off to a promising start.



The MG6 handles well on the road and is composed at speed



Close-up of the handbrake

The MG6's cabin has been improved

FACT FILE

MG6	Top speed: 120mph
Models: MG6: S £15,495, SE £16,995, TSE 18,995	Economy: 35.6mpg on combined cycle
Engine: 1.796cc, four cylinders, turbo-charged petrol	CO ₂ emissions: 161g/km
Power: 160hp	Length: 4,651mm
Transmission: Five-speed manual, front wheel drive	Kerb weight: 1,485kg
Performance: 0-62mph in 8.9 seconds	Insurance group: 13-14/50
	Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles

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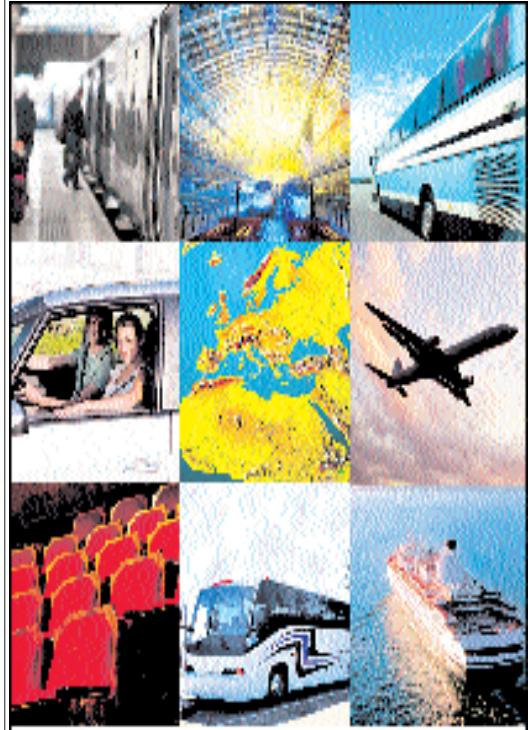
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KATHLEEN NELLIE CHANCE (Deceased)

Published in the *Stourbridge Chronicle* on 24th March 2011. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Probate, Administration and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 120, Bells Lane, Wombourne, West Midlands DY5 9BS, who died on 22/07/2010 are required to send particulars thereof in writing, unregistered or unsealed, to the executors of the Estate on or before 23/07/2011 after which the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have knowledge.

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SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF SANDWELL (BEECHES ROAD, ROWLEY REGIS) (TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE ORDER 2011)

1. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Borough Council of Sandwell, in accordance with the provisions of Sections 14 and 15 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as far as may be necessary, to make a road closure in the area of the Beeches Road, Rowley Regis.

2. The alternative route for vehicles will be via Halesowen Street, Horrey Way, Anchor Way, Halesowen Way, High Street, Holly Road and vice versa.

3. The purpose and reason for the Order is to facilitate works associated with a route improvement scheme.

4. The Order will take effect on 1st April 2011, unless anticipated that the works may commence earlier than this date. The works are expected to be completed on 1st May 2011. The Order may continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months, or until the works in connection with the Order have been completed, whichever is the sooner.

5. Any queries about the works to take place should be directed to Louis Blundell of Enterprise and Infrastructure at 01788 621 181 or 0845 804 4527. Any queries about the effect of the order on traffic using the highway should be directed to Keith Sansom, Traffic and Road Safety Manager, Environment House, Lombard Street, West Bromwich, B70 8RU (Telephone 0121 381 6416).

6. Any queries about the works to take place should be directed to Gerard McVeigh of G McVeigh & Co on telephone number 01788 205803. Any queries about the effect of the order on traffic using the highway should be directed to Keith Sansom, Traffic and Road Safety Manager, Environment House, Lombard Street, West Bromwich, B70 8RU (Telephone 0121 381 6416).

DATED this 26th day of April 2011

IN WITNESS WHEREOF

Director of Legal and Governance Services

Sandwell Council House

Oldbury

West Midlands

SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF SANDWELL (HORSEY HEATH, TIPTON) (TEMPORARY TURNING BANS) ORDER 2011

1. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Borough Council of Sandwell has made an Order, in accordance with the provisions of Sections 14 and 15 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the effect of which will be to temporarily prohibit any vehicle from:-

i) making a right turn out of Arnhem Way into Horsey Heath

ii) making a right turn out of Tame Road into Horsey Heath

iii) making a left turn out of Railway Street into Horsey Heath

2. The purpose and reason for the Order is to facilitate works associated with a route improvement scheme.

3. The Order will take effect on 26th March 2011 and is to enable the provisions of a temporary Notice which was issued on 18th March 2011 to continue in force. The works are expected to be completed on 17th May 2011. The Order may continue in force for a period not exceeding 18 months, or until the works in connection with the Order have been completed, whichever is the sooner.

4. Any queries about the works to take place should be directed to Gerard McVeigh of G McVeigh & Co on telephone number 01788 205803. Any queries about the effect of the order on traffic using the highway should be directed to Keith Sansom, Traffic and Road Safety Manager, Environment House, Lombard Street, West Bromwich, B70 8RU (Telephone 0121 381 6416).

DATED this 24th day of March 2011

N SHARMA

Director of Legal and Governance Services

Sandwell Council House

Oldbury

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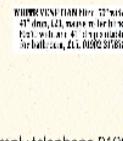
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CITY'S SLICKER HITS GLASSBOYS

Stourbridge 0 Oxford City 3

A SUPERB hat-trick from impressive young striker Felipe Barcelos gave visiting Oxford City swift revenge for the home defeat they suffered to the Glassboys earlier this month.

It was a frustrating Tuesday night for Gary Hackett's men who began brightly only to fall behind to a breakaway goal and then see the visitors grow in confidence and stature while the home side wilted as the second half progressed.

Stourbridge held the upper hand at the beginning. Sam Rock struck a six-minute volley wide and then four minutes later a tackle on Rock saw the ball break to Linden Dovey on the left-hand edge of the area. However, his angled shot was blocked by the legs of Oxford keeper Joe White.

Hayter brace, but Saxons let it all slip

STOURBRIDGE let slip a 17-point lead slip as they were edged out in an enthralling Midlands derby clash.

A brace of Charlie Hayter tries inside the opening quarter should have helped steer the Saxons to victory – but missed tackles and the inability to deal with Coventry's powerful pack proved costly.

Jamie Hearn kicked a fifth-minute penalty, awarded following a high tackle, before sending another delightful kick into touch within reach of the Coventry line, *writes David Lawrence.*

And it was this kick that led to Stour's first try on eight minutes, the Saxons jumpers stealing the line-out before working the ball across the backs to Hayter who ran through a gap.

A second try followed on 19 minutes when Sam Robinson's quick hands fed the ball to Hayter whose pace again took him clear.

Regular

Hearn converted both tries to steer the home side into their 17-0 lead.

But while the visitors' defence has leaked tries this season, they have also scored on a regular basis and they bounced back in impressive style.

On 26 minutes winger Jeff Gregson cut in off the right flank to touch down beneath the posts, full-back Dan Richards adding the extras.

Gregson claimed his second try on 33 minutes, exploiting space on the

As the home side continued to force the pace, in the 25th minute Ryan Rowe beat a defender on the right-hand edge of the box before cracking a low shot narrowly wide of the far post.

Four minutes later however, Stourbridge fell behind to a quality strike from Barcelos. The ball was spread out to him on the left and he cut inside before beating Lewis Solly with a sweet shot into the far corner.

The early goal had clearly given the visitors a boost and they again went close on 34 minutes as a clearance by Leon Broadhurst was charged down by Lyons only for the ball to fall to Jerome Anderson who shot into the side-netting.

Grateful

Four minutes before the break however, City were grateful to White for a top-drawer save to prevent Stourbridge from drawing level.

A Richards penalty five minutes into the second period edged Coventry to within three points and they took the lead for the first time on 55 minutes with a catch and drive dotted down with Richards kicking the extras.

Stourbridge hit back when Hearn and Ashley Smith combined down the left, the latter racing to the line, but Hearn's conversion missed the target.

The home side held on until the 77th minute when they were penalised for pulling down a maul and Richards kicked a simple penalty.

Hayter and Matt Thomas went close for the home side before Hayter picked up a yellow card for some unlawful footwork.

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Dovey's on the spot as he gets in Community spirit



Linden Dovey strokes home the opening goal from the penalty spot

Stourbridge 3 Bedford 0

THE GLASSBOYS celebrated a successful first-ever Community Day as a bumper crowd of 619 – at least double the usual attendance – saw the home side win comfortably.

Gary Hackett's men could have taken the lead in the opening minute when visiting keeper Ian Brown could only palm a right-wing cross from Ryan Rowe out towards the edge of the box where the lurking Ryan Mahon sliced his half-volley over the top. Five minutes later Stourbridge did forge ahead as Rowe exchanged passes with Linden Dovey before being pushed in the back by Ben Islam inside the area. Dovey just managed to convert his spot-kick despite Brown getting a hand to the ball.

A minute later a long free-kick from Gavin Hoyte had Lewis Solly scampering back towards his line before the ball flew narrowly



Sam Rock heads home to complete the scoring. Pictures Tony Marsh

wide. The hosts responded with Sam Rock finding Aaron Drake, whose rasping shot that just cleared the near post.

Stourbridge were almost pegged back in the 31st minute when Jamie Cole's right-wing corner was met by a firm Hoyte header that crashed against the crossbar. Two minutes later they again went

close as a quick goal-kick by Solly allowed Dovey to flick the ball into the path of Rowe who screwed his shot wide of the near post.

The visitors replied soon afterwards with Calum Lewis producing a good forward run before finding Draycott, who struck his shot into the side-netting.

Stourbridge nearly doubled their lead inside

a minute of the second half as a drive from Rowe cannoned off the upright.

In the 62nd minute Broadhurst regained possession and Ben Billingham was in the right place to fire home the second goal.

They made sure of victory in the 77th minute. Dovey fed Broadhurst and his cross was headed home by Rock.

Hednesford were then reduced to 10 men when former Yeltz defender Decio Dones brought down last-man Mark Smith after a mix-up with Liam Francis.

However, Halesowen could not make their advantage pay.

And the hosts sealed the win when Campion completed his hat-trick in the dying minutes from a Haynes cross.

DK take a big step closer to title

Dudley Kingswinford 3 Sutton Coldfield 19

DUDLEY Kingswinford all but claimed the league title as they saw off their nearest rivals Sutton Coldfield in an absorbing game.

In the process DK extended their perfect 100 per cent record to 23 matches, with only two more victories in the final three games needed to secure the Midlands One West crown.

In front of a large crowd of around 700

the visitors took the game to DK and raced into an early lead.

Sutton full-back Josh Groom cleverly chipped over the cover and was rewarded with a dream bounce which took the ball away from the DK defence and straight into his path for the opening try.

Stung into action, DK piled on the pressure and scored their first try on 18 minutes when Stefan Thorp was driven over for an unconverted score.

The hosts took the lead soon after through Jon Tidewell, who latched onto a superb Stefan Shillingford break, with Gareth Bown converting for 12-7.

Leaders inflict beating on luckless Sports

SPORTS suffered a heavy beating at the hands of the West Midlands Premier League leaders.

The game was only two minutes old when Wulfs took the lead.

Joe Williams returned a ball into the Dudley area and James Skedgel steered it past the keeper from 10 yards out.

Sports had an opportunity to

Dudley Sports 0 AFC Wulfrunians 5

respond immediately but Mark Gore fired over from the edge of the area.

They had another good chance just before the half-time interval when Gore fed Matt Weyman but his tame shot was easily collected

by visiting keeper Danny Tipton.

The second half saw Wulfs come out with more purpose and they extended their lead in the 52nd minute.

A Mark Swann header brought a good save from Pearson only for Skedgel to bundle home the rebound.

Swann then fired just wide of the

upright before Dan Crudgington made it 3-0 on 55 minutes, firing home after being released by Anthony Cox.

Swann headed home substitute Ricky Anslow's right wing cross in the 83rd minute.

Four minutes later Anslow fired home from nine yards to complete the scoring.

Late goals as Pitmen head off fightback by the Yeltz

Hednesford Town 4 Halesowen Town 2

A FINE comeback from Halesowen was ruined by two late goals as high-flying Hednesford edged an exciting contest at Keys Park.

The Yeltz came from two goals down to level things up at 2-2 before title dark horses Hednesford extended their impressive league sequence to 12 wins in 13 on Tuesday night.

The hosts started confidently and Cheyenne Dunkley headed a second minute corner just over the bar, *writes David Johnson.*

Just two minutes later the Pitmen took the lead when Liam Francis got the decisive touch on a fiercely-driven Darren Campion free kick.

It looked like being a long night for the Yeltz when Campion doubled Hednesford's lead soon after with a sweeping 20-yard shot.

Indeed, it was nearly 3-0 when Kyle Patterson nodded a Chris Clements corner against the bar after 30 minutes.

But Halesowen weathered the early storm and came back strongly towards half-time, pulling a goal back through Mark Smith who nodded home Adam Robinson's left-wing cross.

Reduced

The recovery continued after the interval and Chris Godwin made it 2-2 when he turned in Keenan Meakin-Richards corner.

A famous comeback was nearly complete in the 66th minute when Gareth Davies turned superbly before seeing his drive unluckily clip the crossbar.

Four minutes later the Pitmen were back in front after Robinson brought down Dunkley in the penalty area and Marvin Robinson duly converted the spot-kick.

Hednesford were then reduced to 10 men when former Yeltz defender Decio Dones brought down last-man Mark Smith after a mix-up with Liam Francis.

However, Halesowen could not make their advantage pay.

And the hosts sealed the win when Campion completed his hat-trick in the dying minutes from a Haynes cross.

Bashley 0 Halesowen 0

HALESOWEN lifted themselves off the bottom of the Zamarrero Premier table on Saturday day with a hard-earned point.

A series of top-class saves from goalkeeper Louis Connor preserved the clean sheet before the Yeltz missed a golden opportunity to complete a 'smash and grab' raid when Bashley keeper David Elm saved a last-minute penalty.

Bashley dominated but Connor repelled all their efforts in Halesowen's defiant backs-to-the-wall defending.

He palmed away Mark Gamble's 12th-minute header and tipped Dave Allen's dipping volley over the bar five minutes later.

Scrambled

From the corner the over-worked Connor turned Luke Whitley's powerful header onto the bar and the loose ball was scrambled clear.

Chris Knowles saw a 27th-minute header cleared off the line and Ryan Murray's far-post header rebounded off the post two minutes later.

Gamble again forced a fine save from Connor when clear on goal late in the first half.

Shaun Cunningham's troops carried more threat after the break but it was Connor who then made two further excellent saves to deny dangerman Gamble.

With minutes left Connor blocked Ian Oliver's drive.

Bustleholme take the win

Bustleholme 2 Shifnal Town 1

BUSTLEHOLME, with eight players missing due to injury or work commitments, dug deep to claim a West Midlands Premier League victory.

They went ahead in the 15th minute through a 25-yard screamer from Jamie Clews.

The home side got a second when Ryan Trumper's 30-yard lob found the empty net. Shifnal pulled one back through Andy Thompson.

Still top despite loss

Stratford Town 2 Tipton Town 0

Alex Cowley also fired off target as Tipton were restricted to shooting from distance.

Andy Gregory headed a corner wide of the mark for both sides cancelling each other out.

Former Stratford man Jozef Jakab missed the target from distance and

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STOURBRIDGE

MARCH 24, 2011

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Welcome to Business Skills

Kim Babb

Covering the Black Country and wider West Midlands, Business Skills was set up in 2007 to focus on providing training for local businesses and employers and now works with over 1,000 employers in the region including Carillion, Westfield, Debenhams, Rymans, Fitness First and Worcester, Bosch Group. Employing 50 people based in Kidderminster, there's a professional sales team on hand to give advice and guidance.

Business Skills offers a wide range of training courses for people who are keen to build on their professional development or get back into work through training. As well as being a market leader in training for Health & Safety, including IOSH and NEBOSH, Business Skills offers a range of apprenticeships, training and assistance for the unemployed as well as gas and electric courses.

Kim Babb, Director at Business Skills, said: *"We support local businesses and employers through a variety of training courses - some of which can be tailored to suit individual needs and some of which are still funded. Through our Membership Scheme we offer consultancy, training days and telephone advice at differing levels."*

Business Skills is a Patron of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and was one of the first colleges in the region to be accredited with the Training Quality Standard.

How healthy is your business?

Health & Safety Expertise is on offer at Business Skills. We offer a wide range of courses including Health & Safety (NEBOSH, IOSH and Coshh), Leadership & Management, IT, Health & Social Care and First Aid.

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Come and see the team at the Safety & Health Expo, 17th to 19th May 2011 at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Hall 2, Stand R94.

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Website puts customers first!

Business Skills recently launched its new website which allows customers looking for training to book and pay online! The new site - bskills.org - went live in January this year and has regular special offers and discounts for online bookings. All current courses are available to book online with the exception of some gas and electric training.

Don't take our word for it!

22 workers at local firm, Control Equipment Ltd based in Netherton, successfully completed qualifications in Storage & Warehouse Level 2, Team Leadership Level 2, ITQ Level 2, Business Administration Level 2 and Business Improvement Techniques Level 2. The Human Resources Manager said: *"By investing in training our sales department has expanded and this has resulted in a number of internal promotions."*



A total of 29 workers, based at Dudley Council's Lister Road depot, achieved health & safety qualifications with help from Business Skills. Dudley's street cleansing team which sweeps roads, cleans up graffiti and helps remove fly-tipping was named one of the top performing teams in the country by the Association of Public Service Excellence awards (APSE) for three years running.



Civvy Street to Savvy Street!

Business Skills is helping ex-forces staff to arm themselves with new qualifications to get them on the road to a new career when they leave the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

Accredited as a preferred supplier by the Career Transition Partnership, we offer a range of training packages and courses which are guaranteed to combat a trip to the Job Centre when ex-forces personnel return to Civvy Street.



Don't take our word for it!

Business Skills helped a group of local unemployed people polish up on their skills in preparation for jobs at the Merry Hill Centre. Clean Domain Regional Manager said: *"This was an extremely well planned project and the majority of staff who were employed through the college were highly trained and very well prepared."*



The first recruits from a pioneering Hospitality Academy established by Westfield and Business Skills to help local people find employment at the new foodcourt in Merry Hill are celebrated after securing jobs at Pizza Express.

Nick Lawler, General Manager, Pizza Express, said: *"The Hospitality Academy has proved invaluable towards the success of our recruitment process so far."*



Looking for Something Special?

WE CAN HELP YOU RECRUIT AND TRAIN



If you're an employer looking for something special, Business Skills can help you recruit employees that will start work already equipped with the skills you need.

Kim Babb said: *"We offer a range of bespoke pre-employment courses that will help local employers fill their vacancies. The courses, which have ranged from call centres through to hospitality and care but which can be tailored to suit individual business needs, are on offer to local unemployed people and are designed to equip them with the skills to get back into work."*

Business Skills has worked with the AA, the Hoteliers Group and Midland Heart Housing Association recently helping them to successfully recruit and train employees.

OUR COURSES

Business Skills offers a wide range of courses including:

NEBOSH

This course, which will give you a nationally recognised qualification in health and safety, is designed for Safety Advisers requiring sound initial training for their role and for those who advise others on health and safety issues including employee health and safety representatives.

The comprehensive course offers an excellent grounding in the fundamentals of occupational safety and health management. NEBOSH qualifications are recognised and respected by employers in all sectors of the economy and provide the benchmark standard against which others are compared.

IOSH

Designed to get you up to speed on the practical action needed to handle health and safety in your workforce, this course will give you the knowledge and understanding of health and safety for employees working in any business sector.

FIRST AID

Under the First Aid Regulations 1981, every employer has a duty to provide "such numbers of suitable persons as is adequate and appropriate in the circumstances for rendering first aid to his employees if they are injured or become ill at work". Whilst the regulations do not lay down how many first-aiders may be necessary in any particular circumstance it is generally accepted that a factory, building or construction site employing more than 50 people needs at least one qualified person. Employers should also take into consideration the difficulties encountered by shift workers, sex of employees and any special hazards. The First Aid course is ideal for anyone looking to increase their knowledge and ability to deal with emergency first aid situations.

FOOD SAFETY

This course is designed for anyone working in a catering, manufacturing or retail setting where food is prepared, cooked and handled.

On this course you will cover a range of things which will improve your awareness of specific food safety issues in a business environment - covering legislation, food safety and hygiene hazards, refrigeration, chilling and cold holding as well as cooking, hot holding and reheating.

Book and Pay Online: bskills.org Or Call 0800 073 0282



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stourbridge.ac.uk 01384 343107



Students brush up on their skills



Stourbridge College students studying Painting & Decorating Level 1 Diploma at the Advanced Technology Centre in Brierley Hill have been brushing up on their skills by painting a children's centre in Lye.

KIDS is a national charity. Locally, they operate from The Orchard Centre, offering support and services to disabled children, young people and their families, including after school activities, youth clubs, Saturday drama and dance clubs, fun and games sessions, sensory sessions, family support including home care support and information services.

The students - five in total - have completed the internal decoration in two weeks to a very high standard, supervised by lecturers from the college. Kim Fellows, Trainer, Painting & Decorating at Stourbridge College, said: "The students have really enjoyed the experience of working on a 'real job' and they have been a credit to the college. It's very important that we have links in our local community and we are grateful for the continued support of the Leyland Decorator Centre in Brierley Hill where the manager, Andy Davies, has matched colours for this project as well as supplying materials at very low cost."

Jayne Weaver, Manager at the KIDS Orchard Centre said: "We provide a valuable service in the local community, and it's fantastic to have our facilities decorated by local students. They have all been very professional, and the standard of work is extremely high. Our sincere thanks go out to Stourbridge College for involving us in this work experience project which has benefited us both."



Local firm sparks interest in apprenticeships

Local Cradley Heath company, Chapman's Electrical, has sparked interest in apprenticeships by taking on three Stourbridge College electrical students so that they can earn while they learn.

Jon Copson, 16, Michael Robinson, 16, and Andrew Greenwood, 17 have been studying Electrical Installation Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3) at Stourbridge College's Advanced Technology Centre and were put forward to be interviewed by Chapman's Electrical after the company, which has been established for 85 years, expressed an interest in growing and nurturing their own talent through apprenticeships.

Mark Lynock from Chapman's Electrical said: "Chapman's have a long history of offering apprentices training opportunities and is committed to having a well trained workforce, whether it is in our Aerial, Electrical, Sales or Service departments. As we move into the emerging sustainable energy markets, such as Photo Voltaic electric generation, we need a highly qualified workforce and what better way to achieve this than by taking on apprentices who have shown that they are committed to their chosen trade by securing on the job qualifications. Our three new apprentices will attend college one day a week and spend the rest of the time working with us obtaining their practical skills."



Plumbers plug the apprenticeship gap

Five Stourbridge College students have been taken on by local employer Regal Building Services, proving that APPS really do work!

Alex Slimm, Thomas Hunter, Adam Simmer, Kyle Willets and Joshua Pountney have been employed by Regal Building services. All five students began on a Full Time Plumbing course, and now spend four days working with their employers and one day at Stourbridge College's Advanced Technology Centre in Brierley Hill perfecting their trade.

Thomas Hunter said: "I find working on site more enjoyable than being in college full time. In the 3 months I have been working on site in Middlepark Road, Dudley I have been able to apply all of the skills I learnt in the classroom and develop them so I can now work to industry standard."

Colin Griffiths, Manager said: "I'm really pleased with all of the lads, they get stuck into all aspects of the job and are learning really quickly. They will stay with me until at least the Spring then dependant on work I hope they will move to the next project with us."



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